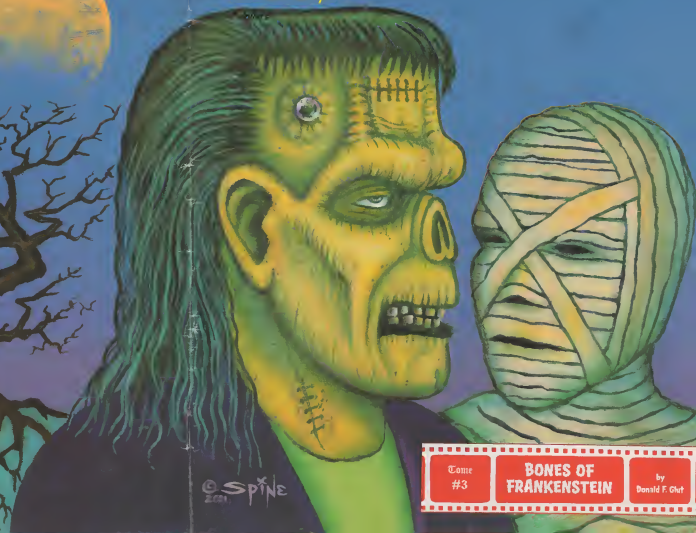


BOOKS BY **FRANKENSTEIN** Presents The New Adventures of **FRANKENSTEIN**™

700¢



© SPINE
2001

Come
#3

**BONES OF
FRANKENSTEIN**

by
Donald F. Glut



The New Adventures of **FRANKENSTEIN** Gothic Checklist

- ☐ #1 FRANKENSTEIN LIVES AGAIN!
- ☐ #2 TERROR OF FRANKENSTEIN
- ☒ #3 BONES OF FRANKENSTEIN
- ☐ #4 FRANKENSTEIN MEETS DRACULA
- ☐ #5 FRANKENSTEIN VS. THE WEREWOLF
- ☐ #6 FRANKENSTEIN IN THE LOST WORLD
- ☐ #7 FRANKENSTEIN IN THE MUMMY'S TOMB
- ☐ #8 THE RETURN OF FRANKENSTEIN
- ☐ #9 FRANKENSTEIN AND THE CURSE OF DR. JEKYLL
- ☐ #10 TALES OF FRANKENSTEIN
- ☐ #11 FRANKENSTEIN AND THE EVIL OF DRACULA

READ AND COLLECT THEM ALL!

CASTLE OF
FRANKENSTEINTM

Presents

The New Adventures of
FRANKENSTEINTM

Tome #3



BONES OF FRANKENSTEIN



created and written by Donald F. Glut

"Spine"-tingling art by Rick "Spine" Mountfort

Druktenis Publishing

348 Jocelyn Pl. Highwood, IL 60040

INSIDE
Tome #3:

BONES OF
FRANKENSTEIN

Chapter I: THE INVADERS.....	6
Chapter II: RETURN OF THE MONSTER MAKER.....	10
Chapter III: VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN.....	14
Chapter IV: THE PRISONER.....	18
Chapter V: THE STRANGERS FROM THE SEA.....	21
Chapter VI: PURSUIT BY TORCHLIGHT.....	25
Chapter VII: KATHERINE.....	28
Chapter VIII: THE MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH.....	31
Chapter IX: PEACE.....	34
Chapter X: SIX BRAINS FOR SIX SKULLS.....	37
Chapter XI: CURSE OF THE MONSTER.....	39
Chapter XII: CONFRONTATION.....	42
Chapter XIII: THE CREATOR AND THE CREATURE.....	45
Chapter XIV: THE SOUNDS OF LIFE.....	48
Chapter XV: DEADMAN WALK.....	52
Chapter XVI: CLIMAX TO TERROR.....	55
BONUS FRANKENSTEIN FEATURE! The MARK OF THE SKULL Art and Story by Dick Briefer.....	60

Dennis J. Druktenis
EDITOR & PUBLISHER
Donald F. Glut
WRITER AND CREATOR
Rick "Spine" Mountfort
"SPINE"-TINGLING ARTIST

READ AND COLLECT THEM ALL!

To the late
PETER CUSHING,
the distinguished "Baron Victor
Frankenstein" of Hammer Films

CASTLE OF FRANKENSTEIN and CASTLE OF FRANKENSTEIN PRESENTS are proprietary trademarks of DENNIS DRUKTENIS PUBLISHING & MAIL ORDER, INC. 348 Jocelyn Pl. Highwood, IL 60040 and are TM and ©2001 THE NEW ADVENTURES OF FRANKENSTEIN is TM and ©2001 by Donald F. Glut. The text of this book has been substantially revised and expanded from earlier versions of the text previously published between 1971 and 1980 in Spain, the Netherlands and Germany, and from the English language version published in the United Kingdom by Mews Books Ltd., 1977 BONES OF FRANKENSTEIN is ©2001 by Donald F. Glut and published by DENNIS DRUKTENIS PUBLISHING & MAIL ORDER, INC. All Rights Reserved. The "Spine"-tingling art is ©2001 by Rick "Spine" Mountfort. All Rights Reserved. CASTLE OF FRANKENSTEIN PRESENTS THE NEW ADVENTURES OF FRANKENSTEIN, TOME #3, BONES OF FRANKENSTEIN is A "Castle-horror-pulp" published by DENNIS DRUKTENIS PUBLISHING & MAIL ORDER, INC. with future issues to be published on a bi-monthly schedule. Printed in the U.S.A. JUNE 2001 ISSUE

FRANKENSTEIN FOCUS

In the murky shadows of Crovakia, Rogaro the wizard and the mad military man The General bring the bones of Victor Frankenstein back to life. Victor Frankenstein is forced to create six new immortal military motivated monsters.

BONES OF FRANKENSTEIN Tome #3 continues *The New Adventures of Frankenstein*. For those of you just joining us, this is an 11 issue series of "Castle-horror-pulp" magazines by Donald F. Glut with "spine"-tingling pulp-style art by Rick "Spine" Mountfort. Both **FRANKENSTEIN LIVES AGAIN!** Tome #1 and **TERROR OF FRANKENSTEIN** Tome #2 are still available so you can still read *The New Adventures of Frankenstein* from the beginning.

Each issue features a Frankenstein Feature-Length novel. These are the "true, authentic and authorized versions." **READ and COLLECT THEM ALL!**

Victor Frankenstein, his original monster creation, a cast of characters worth reading about all await you in **BONES OF FRANKENSTEIN!**

-Dennis J. Druktenis

Letters of FRANKENSTEIN

Dear Dennis

Thank you for the **TERROR OF FRANKENSTEIN** Tome #2. I've just started it but boy it seems as much monster-fun as #1.

Thanks for a job well done. Don Glut seems to really capture that old time monster magic.

George Diezel II Wood Dale, IL

Dennis

I'm really enjoying Don Glut's **TERROR OF FRANKENSTEIN**.

I already own **FRANKENSTEIN**

Tome #3

LIVES AGAIN, and the **BONES OF FRANKENSTEIN** which I found in a used bookstore years ago.

I had been looking all over the place for the rest, with no luck.

Thanks to your reprints I can have the whole set!

THANKS!!!!

Chuck received via Scaremail

P.S. Tell Mr. Glut thanks as well, and to please write more!!!!

(Once again, these are not exact reprints of previous editions. They have been updated, expanded and are now the "true, authentic and authorized versions." -D.J. D.)

Hello Dennis,

I ordered *The New Adventures of FRANKENSTEIN* a few weeks ago and loved it! I'm a high school art teacher here in Florida and I told my drawing class about the story. I then had the whole class draw their own concept of what the monster looked like. The kids turned in some great drawings! So thanks again for giving us some motivation.

David Heywood New Port Richey, FL
(We'd love to see some of those drawings!) -D. J. D.)

Dear Dennis,

I just finished reading **FRANKENSTEIN LIVES AGAIN!** and am full of enthusiasm for the concept and execution of this series. No one on the planet is more qualified to write more Frankenstein adventures than Don Glut, and I can only wonder why these wonderful novels haven't been available before. How about an article by Don filling us in on how they came to be written, their publishing history, and so forth?

There are so many things about the first book: the way Mary Shelley's novel was made into a fictionalized version of a real event; the Arctic environment of the first section; the setting in Ingolstadt with the decrepit castle and villagers. But most of all, what really surprised me was how much I liked his portrayal of the main characters, Burt Winslow, Lynn Powell and the Monster. I'm

looking forward to see how he develops each of them in future episodes.

One word of caution: I began reading **TERROR OF FRANKENSTEIN**, and noticed quite a few editing errors in just the first two chapters. This is in contrast to the fact that there were very few such errors (spelling, wrong word, etc.) in the first book. I hope you will be a little more careful in proofreading in the future. Also, please leave a space between paragraphs when there is a major change of scene or jump in time.

I will say that I would have preferred that you issue these in regular trade paperback book form, even if they cost a bit more. While the magazine format is all right, and does allow for nice, big wraparound covers, I would rather not have the 3 column format, and I would prefer the text in a larger font. However, there's no denying, at \$7.00 the price is right! Enclosed is a check for 3 more issues of *The New Adventures of FRANKENSTEIN*. I hope it is a great success for both you and Don!

Sincerely,

Bill Schelly Seattle, WA

(For more information on this series read *The New Adventures of FRANKENSTEIN LIVES AGAIN!* by Don in **CASTLE OF FRANKENSTEIN** #29 now on sale.

I personally hand-typed **FRANKENSTEIN LIVES AGAIN** but in the case of **TERROR OF FRANKENSTEIN** and upcoming **Tomes** we are directly transferring the text into our magazine format so it appears that we experienced some technical difficulties that we hope to resolve as we go along.

To keep costs down as well as to hopefully help sales we decided to go with a magazine format that hopefully we can keep at 64 pages so we have to stick with the 9 pt. type to achieve this goal. The three column format is our signature Castle look for all our publications that we want to maintain. I hope this answers all your questions. Enjoy the series! -D. J. D.)

YOUR Letters of
FRANKENSTEIN are WANTED!

BONES OF FRANKENSTEIN

CHAPTER I:

THE INVADERS

The architect must have lost his mind to insanity long before tackling the design of this ancient castle. No two lines appeared parallel to one another in the building's construction, the result being that its walls and towers jutted away from and toward each other at mad, wild, sometimes seemingly impossible angles. The castle's near-black outer surface almost blended into the murky shadows of Crovakia, that tiny independent state that was so discreetly and unobtrusively nestled in these mist-shrouded mountains of central Europe.

Indeed, the castle was so nondescript, so overwhelmed and hidden by the dark growth of the surrounding forest, that many residents of the village in the valley below had already forgotten – or at least pretended to have done so – that this ominous-looking place even existed.

"Forgetting" that the castle loomed over the village like some monolithic demon was mostly possible, however, on moonless nights. On evenings like tonight, when a full moon beamed high from a pitch-black cloudless sky, the structure stood out as a monstrous, near-shapeless silhouette, an evil fortress seemingly possessing a life and personality of its own, boldly daring any fool-hardy mortal to cross its ancient threshold.

Only simple, natural trails and pathways led through the woods to the castle. The fact that the place was inaccessible by automobile was relished by the castle's master.

Within the castle, in a large first-story room hidden away by the building's concealing walls, its master Rogaro slapped the gaunt face of the man towering above him. The blow was executed with a force that was surprising for a man of his years and relatively small size. "That will teach you, Morley!" the old sorcerer shouted, his shrill voice erupting with authority.

For several seconds the taller, lanky man just stood there, his pockmarked face red from the impact of Rogaro's hand. Morley neither spoke nor moved. His beady eyes were focused upon the man who was clearly his lord and master.

"That will teach you not to hesitate when your master gives you a command," said the wizard. "My orders are to be obeyed instantly! Precisely! Without the slightest delay! Does your feeble brain comprehend what I just said?"

The two men stood in this large room

that should have existed in some earlier century prior to the birth of Science. Indeed, its furnishings may have been manufactured in some distant age, and the items that those ancient tables and cabinets displayed – the beakers, the flasks, the various-sized cauldrons, the collections of mostly ancient books and manuscripts – would have been familiar ones in the workshops of any of the great sorcerers and alchemists of history.

The sun had only recently set, the moon still climbing, and there was much work to do this night.

The black eyes of the smaller man were still enflamed with rage as they watched Morley finally, lips fluttering, opened his mouth to emit a series of inarticulate moans and gasps. His big hands reached out, trying desperately to communicate. Finally he clutched at his throat as if attempting to force out words that were hopelessly trapped inside of him. As always, however, only guttural, animal-like sounds issued from his mouth.

"Well –?"

Morley nodded affirmatively, once again giving up trying to speak.

Rogaro grinned at his servant with a fiendish expression that matched the fanatical glow in his eyes. Standing in one place, he watched as Morley, scuttling about the room like a trained dog, scuttled over to a table that was cluttered with flasks and jars. Some of these containers were steaming or smoking, releasing foul-smelling vapors from numerous secret concoctions into the musty air.

"Now, fool, as I already told you, fetch the jaw of crushed ammonite!"

Morley glanced fearfully at his master who, despite his smaller stature and advanced age, presented a most formidable image, especially in his regal scarlet robes.

Rogaro seemed to be as ancient as the rotting castle that was his lair, although his true age was known only to himself. The man's face was extremely lean, barely more than skin stretched over angular bones, stretched so tightly, in fact, that his yellowed teeth were almost visible through the parched and sun-browned flesh. A satanic beard and mustache of ash gray contrasted sharply with his shiny bald head. And his gray eyebrows



met to form a single mass of coarse, curly hair.

The master turned to watch as Morley returned with the jar of ammonite powder. His flowing robes, adorned with the colorful signs of the Zodiac, made a swishing sound as they swirled through the weirdly smelling atmosphere of the place.

Holding up the jar, Morley groaned as if to tell his master that he had obediently performed his task.

With a forceful movement of his bony, ancient hand, Rogaro snatched away the container of ground fossils. "That is more like it, fool!" he said.

Then Rogaro's skeletal face stretched and settled into an expression resembling some grotesque smile. His teeth took on additional unsightly hues in the light radiating from the room's largest cauldron in which bubbled and hissed Rogaro's latest foul smelling concoction.

Laughing hideously, Rogaro barked, "Now stand in the background and keep out of my way. Don't make a sound and don't bother me, don't even let out one of those pathetic gasps of yours, until I've completed performing the rite."

Silent and obedient, Morley stalked across the room and took his place in a shadowy corner only a few yards away from a

crackling fireplace. There he remained, standing like a wax dummy as he observed, as he had so many times in the past, the ritual performed by his master.

For only a few moments Rogaro glanced about the room. The place was a veritable storehouse of chemicals, herbs, minerals and preserved animal parts. At irregular intervals, various bubbling concoctions belched into the air their putrid contents, as if battling one another for supremacy in a contest of offending odors, only to win by combining into one indescribable stench. The place was virtually aglow with the bizarre energies being released by chemical reactions, the origins of which had, in many cases, been thoughtfully lost to the ages.

Morley watched as his master performed the blasphemous ritual – the same one he had observed on so many previous occasions. Yet, even though he had seen Rogaro go through the motions and say the arcane words before, the servant found himself fascinated by what was now taking place. Of course, Morley's dull wits scarcely fathomed the true nature of what he was witnessing. Nevertheless his watery eyes bulged farther and farther from their sockets as Rogaro tapped out the ammonite powder, granule by granule, into the hot cauldron.

Rogaro's smile widened, as did his eyes as he watched the last of the fossilized fragments drop to rest atop the surface of the mixture. A moment later a loud burst of thick matter erupted from the cauldron, rising quickly toward the sagging ceiling of the workshop.

"Splendid! Splendid!" exclaimed the sorcerer. He proceeded to stir his concoction until it attained a texture resembling molten lava.

An unintelligible moan of approval was uttered from a dark corner of the room.

"Ah, Morley," said Rogaro as he continued to stir the mixture, "if only you could speak. If only that feeble brain of yours could appreciate what I am accomplishing here this night. If only your lips could praise me for my power. It is times like this that I sometimes wish I'd let you keep your tongue."

Another guttural noise sounded from the gaping mouth of the wizard's servant. Then the larger man began to shiver, his eyes looking this way and that, as the room shook gently with unearthly vibrations that made his nerves tingle with fears of the unknown.

The flames of the fireplace suddenly began to blaze with augmented intensity, a large log breaking into two, shooting off a number of crackling embers.

As the heat arose from the cauldron and churned throughout the room, the walls and

the ceiling seemed to throb and fluctuate in uncanny rhythms. A final burst from the foaming kettle prompted the sorcerer to throw up his withered old hands and open wide his eyes.

"By the Dark Gods that ruled this planet before the time of man, I have done it again!" Rogaro shouted to his observing servant. "Again I have worked the spell that will protect us from our enemies, shield us from those who might trespass upon my domain! And this time, the spell is sufficiently powerful to allow me to have vengeance against those who, in the past, have tried to drive me away... and those who will yet try! Those who fear and resent the mystic powers that course through my body!"

Rogaro leaned forward to inspect further the mixture that he had created. This close, the wizard could feel the heat emanating from the liquid, so intense that it nearly scalded his ancient flesh. His nostrils almost burned with the sulfuric potency of his concoction.

Again he gazed toward the ceiling, his cruel eyes narrowing to focus upon the smoke that seemed to be assuming bizarre and hellish shapes.

"Hear me, O Dark Gods and spirits of the underworld!" Rogaro raved with all of the volume his old vocal cords would allow him, his voice echoing through the barren-walled room. "I, Rogaro, your loyal servant! I summon you from the lowest depths of your shadowy domains. I beg you to once again come to my aid – to help me in this fateful hour!"

Across the room, the eyes of Rogaro's faithful servant smarted intensely from twisting smoke resulting from this display of black magic. Finally he was compelled to cover his eyes, rubbing them to alleviate the pain. Morley wanted to scream, but did not possess the power to do that. By now the spell-tainted air was affecting his lungs also, and he had to breathe some fresh air if he were to survive his master's ritual.

At last, no longer to resist the urge, Morley rushed toward the nearest open window, stuck out his head, and breathed deeply of the clean evening air.

Morley's actions, however, went entirely unnoticed by Rogaro, who continued to revel in his own mad success, his voice chanting incessantly, his hands reaching out to play with the twisting clouds of smoke taking obscenely bizarre form above and in front of him. The wispy-like images were beckoning to the wizard, imparting silent knowledge to his brain, warning him...

For a moment he wondered why it took this long for "them" to pay him a call.

"The invaders from another and once-powerful land are finally coming here," Rogaro said to the swirling intangible forms. "And they will come with but a single purpose – to restore the greatness of their homeland by taking over this land and add it to what was once their growing empire. And they hope to accomplish this by attempting to force me to submit to their own political ideologies."

The smoke images hovered, hand-like tendrils reaching out toward Rogaro and then dissipating in the air.

"But remember, O masters of darkness," he continued, "that Rogaro will never submit. Nor have I ever. But remember also this – that if I am destroyed, there will be no one left to enact your wills and desires in this sector of the world."

Morley's attention, however, was still directed outside the castle window. His sharp eyes were focused on a point somewhere deep within the forest surrounding the castle, its lush vegetation illuminated by the bluish beams of the full moon. At first he thought he only imagined seeing the figures approaching from between the trees. But as he squinted and refocused again he clearly perceived forms hastily approaching the castle of Rogaro.

There were five men, each of them on horseback, thundering toward the building. As they rapidly came closer, the servant could see that they were wearing military uniforms. In the moonlight, their weapons, borne in leather sheaths and holsters, became terribly apparent.

Making a quick turn, Morley rushed away from the window, the images of those uniformed horsemen branded indelibly onto his brain.

Rogaro the wizard was still chanting and moving as the smoke from the cauldron gradually gyrated to assume the spectral shape of a great horned demon. The floating horror whirled then drifted, begging as if for a more tangible substance. The sorcerer continued his prayers to the Underworld, and with each additional word the demonic shape became more solid. In a few more moments, Rogaro knew, the thing would coalesce into a tangible, living entity.

"Just a while longer, O creatures of darkness!" Rogaro ranted, his eyes like twin points of fire. "Soon your loyal servant shall have the help he has prayed for! Just a while longer..."

In another moment, Morley was at his master's side, tugging fiercely at a sleeve of his robe. His lower jaw slack, he moaned loudly and pointed toward the window. Then

his strong hand locked upon the wizard's shoulder.

Immediately the expression on Rogaro's face snapped from one of solemnity to boiling hatred. The spell had been broken by the servant's interruption. The misty shape of the demon, only seconds away from taking on solid form, instantly broke apart into a miasma of fading vapors. A moment later, what had been a demon forming was nothing more than a dispersing collection of disappearing vapors.

"You ignorant fool!" screamed Rogaro at the peak of his voice. "You've broken my concentration! You've terminated the spell that required such strain ... such will power ... to perform! Can you imagine how long it will take me to bring it back?"

Morley shook his head and again pointed toward the window, groaning incoherently.

"Now, because of your idiocy, the Dark Gods' demon has returned to its shadowy domain. Morley, I have tolerated your stupid actions for too long!"

Morley was unaffected by his master's words. His mind was presently occupied only with the commotion already occurring outside the castle. He groaned, sounding somewhat hopeful, and yet again indicated the window. Then he shook his head from side to side.

The wizard's old yet powerful hands sought his servant's throat and began to exert strangling pressure.

"For too long," the elder man screeched on, his skeletal face growing hot with rage. "I can do better without the likes of a bumbling moron like you interfering with everything I do or hope to accomplish!"

Morley choked as his master's fingers tightened around his neck and pressed even tighter, causing the muscles and veins to bulge against his skin. Still, the servant was not concerned that, at any moment, he might be lying dead on the floor. Instead of resisting, he continued to gesture toward the window and make what sounded like meaningless grunts.

At last, the man wearing the Zodiac robes realized that there was more to his servant's intrusion than simple ignorance. His thin face turned toward the window and his ears strained to hear the sounds of horses whinnying and hooves stomping the ground. He could also hear men conversing amongst each other in low voices and in a language he did not understand.

Releasing Morley, Rogaro moved to the window with all the speed his ancient frame permitted.

Outside, below the window, were five of the men the vision had warned him about —

five of the invaders — now off their horses and walking, almost marching, proudly in their military garb. Two of them carried rifles, two of them machineguns, the stout, overweight man who was obviously their leader not drawing a weapon. They stopped at the castle's front door.

A moment later, a wagon, driven by another soldier and drawn by two magnificent black horses, thundered through the woods and stopped just behind the soldiers.

"Morley!" Rogaro said in a loud gasp. "It's they! Those who have already taken control of this state and now seek to control me. But they will have to kill me before I succumb to their wills. If only I had more time to conjure up another demon. But time is the one thing I no longer have."

The wizard's heart was rapidly sinking in despair. Around him were the secrets of the ancients, the books of spells and ingredients for potions which, given ample time and concentration, could topple kingdoms. Now, for the blunder of a mute servant, he might soon be slain by this handful of military men.

Quickly Rogaro moved away from the window. He knew that it was only a matter of seconds before the soldiers would be at his door. The door was already barricaded by a heavy wooden brace, but an army with so much firepower at their disposal would no doubt find that barrier a simple obstacle to penetrate.

Morley motioned with both hands toward the window.

"No!" shouted Rogaro at his servant, desperately. "There's no escape through the window. We're too high up. Besides, even if we did survive the drop they would cut us down with their bullets before we could make it into the woods."

The mute man looked toward his master imploringly, his face taking on a confused expression.

"What will we do, you want to know? I'm afraid, my faithful dog, we will just have to face them. They will take us anyway. Perhaps if we offer no resistance our fate will not be so unpleasant."

There passed what seemed to be an eternity of silence before a raucous voice sounded from outside the castle.

"We know you are in there, Rogaro!" the heavy voice shouted in the region's own native language. "And we know what you are and what powers you possess! I suggest that you let us inside without resistance."

"And if I do not?" Rogaro yelled back, attempting to establish his authority in this, his own domain.

"Then I'll be forced to order my men to

blow in the door with hand grenades and then to take you by force," said the military leader, lowering his voice. "The choice is yours to make. But for your sake and my own, I sincerely hope you choose the former. And I also suggest you make your choice swiftly, or we'll be forced to make it for you."

Rogaro looked toward Morley who did not respond in any way. The sorcerer knew, from the expression on his servant's face, that Morley did not wish to die; nor would he plea for his own life at the expense of his master's.

Then a look of supreme confidence appeared Rogaro's features, as though he had suddenly grown to be in control of this seemingly inescapable predicament.

"Don't worry," Rogaro finally said to his servant, as if totally oblivious to the arsenal of weapons waiting outside. "I'll get us both out of this. Neither of us will die tonight. But later ... later we'll have our revenge. I'll unleash the demon again and we'll destroy them all."

Then the old sorcerer bravely stood before the window and looked down toward the ensemble of men, their uniforms taking on strange hues in the cool beams of the moon.

"You can put away your weapons," Rogaro said to the group below, raising his hands to show that he would not resist. "I'll have my servant open the door for you so you can enter. There is no need for violence of any sort."

"All right, Rogaro," the leader, a rather heavyset man with numerous medals pinned to his uniform, responded, "we're coming in. But remember, if you try tricking us in some way with that witchcraft of yours, we'll shoot you to pieces before you can even do a card trick." Turning, he added, "put down your weapons."

Motioning to his servant, Rogaro watched Morley scamper out of the room and to the vestibule leading to the castle's front door. Moments later the wizard was standing behind the taller man.

Pointing toward the brace that kept the door sealed from the inside, Rogaro commanded sternly, "Open it. And do nothing to aggravate them unless I tell you to do so."

With a puzzled look in his eyes, Morley nodded, and then obediently slid aside the heavy brace, letting it drop with a resounding *thud* against the hard floor. Then he opened the centuries-old wooden door.

Their leader first, the soldiers, standing almost at attention, peered into the castle to behold the stoic, crimson-robed figure standing before them. The wind from outside the building rushed inside, causing the man's robes to billow out like the wings of some

gigantic vulture.

"I am Rogaro," the robed man spoke without the slightest hint of fear in his voice. "I am Rogaro and I welcome you within the walls of my castle."

The heaviest soldier with all the medals grinned as he marched with military precision over the threshold. "As if you could stop us if you chose not to invite us in," he chuckled.

Once their commanding officer was inside the place, the other soldiers followed. For almost half a minute the small band looked about the room, then – with the exception of one rifle-bearing man who remained with their leader – they marched off to search the other rooms.

"I have to make certain that you have no weapons hidden on the premises," said the chubby man.

"I require no weapons for protection," said Rogaro, cracking a grin of his own. "At least not the kind you are familiar with."

"Touché," said the other man. "But still, I like to be certain that I have not been led into a trap – the kind of trap I'm familiar with."

Within a half hour, the soldiers returned to join their leader, reporting that they had found no guns or grenades – only Rogaro's expected collection of chemicals, animal tissues and other alchemical trappings.

At last, obviously satisfied that the wizard had not deceived him, at least not yet, the leader removed his sash from his holster and shoved it against Rogaro's face.

"You may call me the General," he said, pressing the barrel of his automatic hard into the sorcerer's flesh.

Morley, watching, did nothing, afraid that his slightest miscalculated move would cause his master's death.

Rogaro neither flinched nor exhibited fear. "That is all you need to know," the General continued. And I suspect that a man with your wisdom has already guessed why I and my men are here."

The man wearing the robes smiled, showing his sparse arrangement of teeth. "Of course, 'General'." Rogaro said fearlessly. "Or, at least I can guess. Your country no longer holds the power in this world that it once possessed. Its philosophies have changed. But there are still those, such as yourself, who do not agree with the present arrangement – who would like to see your country return to its old ways, with all of its previous might and territorial possessions."

"I am indeed impressed, Comrade Rogaro," the General replied. "Did your spells tell you all that?"

"Some of it," answered the wizard. "Some psychic talents, plus old-fashioned deduction

and common sense filled in what the spells didn't tell me. Not to mention the fact that those uniforms are not the standard ones worn by members of your country's army. I suspect that you plan to start rebuilding your former empire and that the plan involves your recent take-over of Crovackia. I admit, however, that neither my spells nor my own mental abilities told me why you would want so insignificant a place as this."

"All in due time, Rogaro," said the General, "all in due time. And you have no objection to our occupying this state?"

"Obviously not," returned the wizard boldly. "I let you in here, did I not? Know that few men other than Morley, my servant, and myself have ever set foot in this castle since I acquired it. At least entered it and left by walking away under their own power. Anyway, I bear no love for any of those fools in the town."

"And I assure you their feelings for you are mutual."

"You know that I have powers, Comrade General. You must also know that I could, at any time, conjure up some 'thing' to do my bidding."

"But you have not, is that what you mean?" asked the General.

The wizard nodded slowly, smiling. The General's face slowly expanded to a big, toothy grin. He lowered his weapon and bolstered it. Finally he placed a firm hand on Rogaro's shoulder.

"I think the two of us are going to get along just fine," the General chortled. "At least as long as the two of us play, how do the Americans say, 'straight with each other.' Funny, though," he went on, "My men and all were convinced that you would put up some kind of a fight ... use some supernatural means to keep us out. And all the while, the reason we really came here was to enlist your aid."

Enlist your aid?

The words made little sense to Rogaro. Why should these men, with their mighty weapons, require his help for anything? How could he help them in adding Crovackia – a territory that, to him at least, had no value other than its seclusion – to their reforming empire? For several long moments the wizard was lost in his own thoughts, attempting to remain a step ahead of the General, before he spoke again.

"And how is it that you need aid from me?" Rogaro finally asked.

The military leader looked questionably toward Morley.

"Don't concern yourself over Morley," said the robed man. "Yes, he is stupid. But he is

loyal to me and to whomever I tell him to be loyal. He will not betray his master. And anything you have to say to me can be said in front of him."

"And how do I know that this ... this Morley will not repeat what he knows. You know what they say about 'the slip of a tongue' ..."

"Morley," Rogaro commanded his pockmarked servant, "open your mouth for the General."

Obediently the servant opened his mouth, affording the General a look inside.

All that the General saw was blackness.

"You see, Comrade General," said Rogaro, beaming with pride, "you need not worry about Morley's tongue 'slipping.' It has already done that ... slipped right out of his mouth. Yes, Morley used to talk too much, many years ago. But I took precautions to ensure that he was not so ... loquacious. All right, fool, you can close your mouth again and stop looking quite so much like an idiot."

Rubbing his rounded chin, the General turned to address two of his men, both of them lieutenants in their mid-twenties. "All right, you," he said. "Go outside and bring it in."

"Yes, Comrade General," the lieutenants replied, almost in unison. Turning, they marched back across the threshold and stepped outside into the moonlight.

"What is this all about?" inquired Rogaro, watching the men step up to the wagon.

"What is this 'it' they are bringing in?"

"Patience," said the General, smiling and obviously enjoying the suspense he was causing in the old sorcerer. "What they are fetching will soon explain our true mission here in Crovackia and how you fit into that mission."

Silent yet curious, Rogaro watched as the two men slid something off the back of the wagon, each man grasping one end. As they bore the object away from the wagon and toward the castle, its identity – a very old but apparently once ornate wooden coffin – was revealed by the moonlight. With the reverence of faithful Paul bearers, the lieutenants carried the casket across the threshold, Morley moving aside to let them pass. Then they gently set the oblong container down on the castle floor at the feet of the General and Rogaro.

"Say now, General, what is this all about?" asked the sorcerer.

"You could never even imagine the trouble we went through to acquire this gruesome little treasure," boasted the General.

"It has only been in our possession for the past couple of days."

"What have you brought me?" Rogaro queried again, his cold eyes following the lines of the casket. Seen up this close, the wizard could discern that the box was even older than it had appeared outside, more than a century it seemed. The wood, thick with mold and decay, looked as though it would crumble apart at any moment. There was a distinctive odor about the thing, the smell of death, that was more offensive to the wizard than any of the stench his own experiments into the occult had ever produced or probably ever would produce. "It appears as though you have brought me a corpse."

The overweight military leader's grin widened and his teeth flashed, his cheeks expanding like the face of a Halloween jack-o-lantern.

"Ah, but what a corpse!" said the General. "Do you mind if we retire with it to your workshop?"

"By all means," said Rogaro, taking the lead into his workshop with Morley following him close behind.

The General, the two lieutenants bearing the coffin, and then the other men then entered Rogaro's workshop in rapid pursuit.

The casket rested in a place of honor in the middle of the alchemist's workshop. Standing at one end were Rogaro and his servant, at the other the General. Positioned at other spots in the room were the other soldiers.

The light from the workshop's fireplace reflected off the General's very white teeth as he spoke.

"Obviously, Comrade Rogaro," he said, "I have been informed by reliable sources that among your talents as a sorcerer and medium are certain powers over life and death."

"I don't make zombies," said Rogaro. "I am not talking about the crude methods employed by Voodoo priests," said the General, running his chubby fingers along the closed lid of the coffin. "I am referring to something with a bit more... finesse."

"You are not talking about zombies, then?"

The General shook his head. "If I did I'd have gone to Haiti, not Crovakia."

"Then what do you want?" Rogaro's tone of voice suggested that he already suspected to what end the General was leading. His tight lips drew back in a wry smirk.

"I have been informed that you, Comrade Rogaro, possesses the knowledge and ability to contact the spirits of those long dead," the General said without his former smile, his expression becoming more and

more serious as he proceeded. "According to my sources, you know how to summon into this plane of existence the spirit of one who has died, even many centuries ago, the length of time he or she has been dead having no bearing whatsoever on this extraordinary feat."

"You have heard correctly," said Rogaro. "Then you wish me to perform... a séance?"

The General shook his head. "I have heard, from reliable sources, that you have the power to literally trap such a spirit inside its former body, despite the state of decomposition that it is in. It has also been called to my attention that what time has ravaged away you can restore - so that virtually anyone who has died can be made to live again."

The sorcerer beamed with pride. "That may be somewhat of an exaggeration, but - and although I may not have actually attempted such experiments yet - I may have the knowledge to perform such a feat."

"You can do it," stated the General emphatically, "and so you will do it."

"And it is in this coffin that the man or woman you wish me to 'restore' now rests - or, at least what's left of him or her?"

"That should be obvious."

"And, just for the sake of discussion, what if I refused?" The wizard smiled.

The General replied not with words, but by again resting his pistol against his face. "You will not refuse," he threatened. "Nor will you fail."

"And what would you say if I told you I cannot restore the dead?" asked the wizard.

"In that event..." the General replied, grabbing a machinegun away from one of his soldiers.

And with a sudden movement, the military leader pivoted on his heel, making a perfect about face, and blasted a row of glassware from one of the workshop tables. For several moments the room echoed with the reverberating sounds of rapidly fired bullets and scattering, crashing glass. The smell of ignited gunpowder added to the myriad obnoxious odors already lingering in the room.

Morley clutched his own chest as though one of the bullets had somehow fired in the reverse direction or ricocheted back to him. Regaining his composure, the servant watched his master who had somehow managed to move not one iota throughout the General's threatening display.

"Then that, Comrade Rogaro, will happen to you!"

"No need to be redundant, Comrade

General," said Rogaro.

"Besides," said the General, "I think once you know the identity of the remains in that coffin you'll find this little project most interesting."

"I've been waiting for you to tell me," replied the wizard.

"You couldn't imagine how difficult it was to get hold of this," he said. "To begin with, the man - yes, it was a man - died more than two hundred years ago in the Arctic. That the corpse was ever returned home, to Geneva, Switzerland, is a miracle in itself. Recently securing the remains just recently from Geneva presented numerous problems I won't bore you with here. But the remains are now in this box and they have been verified as authentic."

"Who is... was he?"

"Then you will do this work, Comrade Rogaro?"

"Under the circumstances," said the wizard, "how can I refuse? But first, Comrade General, I must see the remains."

"There is nothing unreasonable in that demand," he replied, snapping his fingers.

In response, the two lieutenants pulled aside the lid of the coffin.

Rogaro peered into the box, noting its contents - a yellowish, partially articulated human skeleton gazing up at him from eyeless black sockets. Around the skeleton were tatters of what once may have been a fairly expensive and stylish Eighteenth Century black suit.

The General stepped back from the coffin, one hand making a sweeping gesture toward the box and its contents. To Rogaro he seemed to be unveiling some great work of art. The General cleared his throat and his round cheeks flushed.

"You are indeed in store for a great honor, Comrade Rogaro," the General continued. "For before you lie the remains of a very great man - a man that, to most of the world at least, is mere a creation of fiction or the product of legend. But there he is, 'out of the flesh, so to speak, a man who, in his own way, gave life to what was previously dead. Now you will give life to the owner of these brittle bones. Comrade Rogaro, let me introduce you to the skeleton of Victor Frankenstein!"

CHAPTER II: RETURN OF THE MONSTER MAKER

The dark eyes of Rogaro, the sorcerer, were locked in astonishment upon the skeleton of Victor Frankenstein, the latter returning the old man's stare from the

skull's empty eye sockets.

"Victor Frankenstein?" said Rogaro, his mute servant Morley looking down at the skeleton over the wizard's left shoulder. "Yes, I sensed there was something 'special' about these remains, but ... Victor Frankenstein? Then he was an historical character?"

"Ah, so you know the name of Victor Frankenstein, Comrade Rogaro?" The General remarked as the wizard continued to scrutinize the fleshless thing that had, more than two hundred years ago, been a living human being.

"I know something of Frankenstein's 'history,'" answered Rogaro solemnly. "Some of the legends surrounding him have traveled even here, to the hills of Crovakkia. But until this moment I thought most of the old tales either rumors or legend. And, of course, I long ago read the Mary Shelley novel." He turned to indicate a dusty bookcase jammed with old volumes, pointing to a tattered three-volume set. "There is the original three-volume edition of *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, published in 1818," the wizard went on, "sharing a shelf with other books of the similar themes men bringing manlike beings to life ... tales of the Golem, homunculi, even Colodi's *Pinochio*. Even I tried my hand at creating a living Homunculus, without success, of course. But until now I believed the Frankenstein story to be entirely legend - this story of a genius who created a Monster by piecing together various limbs and organs and then imbuing that artificial being with life."

The military official smiled so widely that his round face suddenly resembled the full moon that was now shining down on Rogaro's grotesquerie of a castle.

"I can assure you, Comrade Rogaro," he said profoundly as he walked up the elder man's side, "that the Mary Shelley story, although certain details may have been in error, is no mere legend that poor superstitious peasants and townsfolk discuss in whispers behind locked doors. We have verification now that Victor Frankenstein did give life to a being that he created more than two hundred years ago. Moreover, only recently that Monster, as people call it, the very thing created by Frankenstein, was found frozen in a block of Arctic ice and restored to life by some decadent American scientist. Furthermore, we have it on authority that the Frankenstein Monster was recently destroyed. Destroyed in a tremendous explosion somewhere near Iceland."

The sorcerer finally shifted his interest from the skeleton to the General, who was

grinning with pride.

"But how," inquired Rogaro, "can you be certain that these bones are indeed those of Victor Frankenstein. Surely any skeleton of comparable age would ..."

"Because," the heavy-set military leader cut him off with authority, "it is the business of certain men in my employ, certain men of unquestionable loyalty to our cause, to get at the hearts of certain matters such as this. Finding the Frankenstein family vault proved to be a relatively simple task, especially given the prominence of family's prominence during the Eighteenth Century. Actually robbing the vault was the most risky part of the operation; that as well as smuggling the coffin and its contents out of Switzerland."

"But you are absolutely certain as to its identity?" asked the sorcerer.

"Indeed," posited the General. "In addition to verifying the name on the vault, our forensic scientists have subjected the skeleton to various tests, including DNA matches with descendants of the Frankenstein line whom we, er, persuaded to cooperate with us."

"Then there is absolutely no doubt as to the skeleton's authenticity?" asked Rogaro.

The General shook his head. "Absolutely none," he said in his deep voice. "These are unquestionably the remains of Victor Frankenstein, the monster maker. On that I would stake my life. In some ways I already have."

The elderly wizard snickered, aware that the General would undoubtedly pay the same price as he if he failed in his task of restoring life to Victor Frankenstein.

"One more question. Why then," the robed man inquired, "do you want me to resurrect this man? Surely there are others who could better suit your needs to further your cause. Have you considered Hitler ... Genghis Khan ... your own Stalin ... ? And there are many other candidates throughout history to choose from. But why Victor Frankenstein? He was no leader. Surely you know that he was not a fiendish man by anyone's standards. According to the novel, at least, Frankenstein only sought to discover the secrets of life and death. He was enthusiastic, granted, and not too scrupulous in his methods. And he had no prescience that the thing he created would become a murderous Demon."

"I know all that, Comrade Rogaro," the General said, moving away from the casket. He walked toward one of the workroom's open windows and peered out toward the moonlit trees. "But you misunderstand our motives. It is not a leader that we want.

Leaders are the easiest commodities for us to acquire and they are all easily replaced. It is for a quite different reason that my government ... or at least what will again become my government ... wants Frankenstein brought back to life."

"Then why?" Rogaro's eyes grew wide with anticipation. "I see no reason for all of this suspense and secrecy, given how much you've already told me."

Still gazing out the window, the General replied, saying each word with dramatic flair, "My superiors, despite the nuclear might that will someday again be in their control, realizes the value in the traditional foot soldier ... and the guerrilla warrior. Many of our future conquests will no doubt involve conflicts not unlike those that have occurred in the past in such remote places as Korea and Vietnam. As our growing army is still relatively small, we face various problems ... the number of personnel, not to mention morale. Today's soldiers are not as, how do the Americans say it, 'gung ho' to engage in man on man combat as they were, say, back in World War II. But if we had an army of nearly immortal dead soldiers to do our fighting in the jungles and other hellholes of the world, our problems would be solved."

"You want Victor Frankenstein to be one of your new breed of soldiers?" asked Rogaro, stroking his beard. His peripheral vision detected Morley take closer to the coffin to look at its contents.

The General turned and stepped away from the window. "On the contrary," he said, his eyes almost twinkling. "Frankenstein will create for us that army! Just consider the possibilities, Comrade Rogaro! Visualize an army of soldiers, each one of them comprising the best and strongest parts of men who have already died. Walking composite corpses. Walking deadmen infused with Frankenstein's spark of eternal life. Bullets would not halt them or even slow them down. Human fighting machines that will be relentless in performing their duties for the cause."

"Soldiers," added Rogaro, his interest in the General's project gradually gaining momentum, "or monsters, if your prefer, that, if damaged, could be repaired ... given new limbs ... even new brains ..."

"With nothing short of a massive explosion capable of destroying them. Even then, who can say? Perhaps their separated limbs might survive to carry on their battle against the enemy. And even if they are sufficiently destroyed, there will be others waiting on Frankenstein's production line to replace them."

Rogaro's thoughts conjured up a mental picture of the General's proposed army of human monstrosities. He envisioned a dozen or more gigantic living automata, their nearly indestructible bodies sewn together, roving across the battlefield without any purpose save claiming the lives of their foes. "Interesting..." he said, "and quite possible."

"Possible," said the General, "and, in the long run, quite practical."

Finally, Rogaro's consciousness and attention snapped back to the military leader.

"And you believe that, if I do succeed in restoring Victor Frankenstein to life, that he can create this army of monsters?"

"Precisely," the General answered with grim determination. "He gave his original creation the ability to defy both death and time... to live on endlessly. He'll accomplish the same scientific miracles with an army of such creatures."

"Remember that the original Frankenstein Monster turned against its creator," the sorcerer reminded him.

"This time, however, the equation will be altered," said the General. "We will ensure that Frankenstein's new creations will be different from the original. He will alter their brains. He will make certain that these soldiers will not be able to think for themselves, that they will be subject only to the wills of our superiors. They will never, as did the first creation, have the power or even the desire to revolt against their masters."

Rogaro began to pace about his workshop, Morley always staying close at hand, and with the General's armed men observing his every step. When the wizard stopped walking there was a look of sincere interest on his leather-like, bony face. Plainly the General's project intrigued him. He stepped into the center of the room, commanding the group's attention, and looked down into the head end of Frankenstein's coffin.

"One last question, Comrade General," he said, his thin lips wrinkling to simulate a smile. "Granted," he went on, choosing his words with care, "assuming that I can resurrect Victor Frankenstein and that he can create this army you envision. What if Frankenstein refuses to comply with your demands? He has already had one very bad experience with the creation of life. Why would he want to repeat that mistake?"

"He will comply," the General posited.

"Remember also that, regarding my phase of this project, I will be literally snatching his soul from its eternal rest, a rest which he may prefer to renewed life. Threatening him with your machineries

should have no effect on a man who might want to return to the peace of his grave."

The General grinned so wide that he revealed all of his highly polished teeth in the glow of the workshop's fireplace. He pointed at the old man in the Zodiac robes and pressed his fat fingers hard against the wizard's bony chest.

"That, my dear Rogaro," he said with utter confidence, "is where you come in."

"?"

"It will be your task to see that nothing happens to Frankenstein after his resurrection. Victor Frankenstein must not die! Not until that day when his usefulness to us is unequivocally over. Do you understand?"

Rogaro returned an affirmative nod.

"Victor Frankenstein must not be harmed in any way," the General went on, slamming one fist into his other palm. "He must live on and on. But he will be made to believe that, someday, we will reward him for his services by returning him to his eternal rest. That will be the carrot... or threat, if you prefer, that we'll hold over his head. He will not enjoy the peace of death until he has created our army of Frankenstein Monsters. And that," he began to laugh, almost gleefully, "might not be for, let us say, quite a while!"

The ancient wizard brought a withered hand to his gray beard and began to stroke the dry hair. There was a gleam in his almost black eyes. The side of his mouth curled into a subtle smile.

"Well," the General began, his voice gruff, "can you do this?"

Rogaro waited for a few seconds before answering. His eyes stared off into space, completely ignoring the stinging atmosphere created by the chemical vapors still permeating the air. Then, slowly, he began to turn towards the military leader and flashed his yellow teeth in a demonic grin.

"Well," the unformed man repeated impatiently, aware that something must have been formulating inside the sorcerer's crafty brain. He turned to see that his soldiers were growing uneasy, as if they feared Rogaro as much as they feared his own authority. He knew that, despite the firepower they all possessed, that these men had reason to be wary of this gaunt man in the Zodiac robes.

"Victor Frankenstein will live again!" Rogaro finally pronounced. "And, as you requested, he will not be able to die as long as he is under my protection. But I must stipulate one condition. The technique I will use to restore Frankenstein's life will require what is called an ectoplasmic transfer."

"I do not understand," the General

admitted. "Explain."

Frowning and cocking an eyebrow, Rogaro continued, speaking with authority, "I did not expect you to understand, General. Let me put it this way. Your job is to see that I perform my task. My job, of course, is to do it... and to comprehend fully what I must do. Realize that the technique I will utilize in giving Frankenstein back his life is the result of almost a century of studying the arcane arts. And you will not understand them after but a brief conversation."

"Nevertheless," said the General, "you will provide me with some kind of an explanation, no matter how meager."

"Suffice it to say," the elder man went on, speaking condescendingly as a teacher might to an inferior student, "that the flesh that will form from Frankenstein's bones will not be his own. It will be composed of ectoplasm, that is, a substance that will issue not from the air or from the skeleton itself or even from the spirit world. It will come from my own body, being produced as a result of the most strenuous concentration."

"Meaning?"

"Meaning that the personality or soul of Victor Frankenstein will be trapped inside a body that, except for the skeleton itself, comprises material that is part of myself."

"The consequences?"

"In a psychic sense," said Rogaro, "Victor Frankenstein and I will share a psychic bond."

"I think I can guess what you're getting at," the General said resentfully.

"Yes, General," said the wizard, experiencing at least a modicum of triumph. "If anything happens to me, Victor Frankenstein's spirit will immediately return to its rest, while his body dissolves back to the bones lying before you in the casket."

"It appears as though you've secured for yourself some good life insurance, Comrade Rogaro," the leader finally replied.

"Insurance or not, it is the only way this procedure can be performed."

"All right then," said the General, "if it's insurance you must have, so be it. I will not deny that our cause requires your services. Indeed, you are the only man we know of capable of doing what must be done. We will comply with your requirements."

The sorcerer's face suddenly took on the look of a grinning skull, not unlike the one gazing up from the coffin. His high cheekbones seemed to move with a life of their own in the flickering firelight.

The General glanced at his wristwatch. "Then let's get started," he said. "We've already spent too much time talking and not

doing. Can we start now?"

Rogaro's face now resembled more a carved mask than a human visage. There was also a glow about it, partially from the fireplace's light, that suggested that the wizard was now experiencing his own renewal of power. As he turned and took a few steps closer to the fireplace, its radiance added new colors to his face, revealed lines and wrinkles not perceived by the soldiers before, giving him the appearance of a living mummy.

"I can see nothing to impair our starting immediately," said Rogaro, looking toward the leader of this small band of soldiers. His eyes shifted, his vision looking onto that of his servant.

Morley nodded in his usual subservient way.

"Splendid," replied the General.

The General and his seven soldiers sat around an antique circular table in the castle's workroom. Their hands had been placed palm-down on the table with the fingers of one hand touching those of the man seated on either side. An unmistakable uneasiness possessed all eight of the uniformed men. Clearly they were about to enter an unknown territory not related to their own familiar world of guns and violence. Séances were definitely out of their realm. Occasionally they exchanged glances that betrayed their fears and apprehensions in going through with this ritual.

But their participation in the séance was necessary. Rogaro had explained in great detail that the ritual required a maximum amount of human energy, which he would acquire by tapping into their collective brainpower. The General had further warned them that not participating in the séance would win them a quick bullet through the same brain that Rogaro required for his energy pool.

Morley, obedient as always, followed his master's commands. He smothered the flames in the fireplace with buckets of sand.

Darkness was important during the séance, Rogaro mentioned, and the only light that would enter this room would be that provided by the full moon. There was great power in moonlight, the wizard had often told his servant, and its radiance this night would enhance his powers to perform the séance.

Already the room was fragrant with the smells of incense and numerous potions and chemicals.

Rogaro himself was still standing in the back of the room in front of one of the towering bookcases. In his hand was a large

and heavy black volume, obviously very old, with the word *Demonomicon* emblazoned upon its age-worn front cover. The wizard had been studying a certain passage for almost an hour, his mummy-like lips silently reading the text written by hand on one of its crumbling pages, his wise old brain taking in and digesting every arcane word. Finally, with a smile and a nod, he gently closed the book and replaced it upon its bookshelf space.

"Now we can proceed," Rogaro said, striding boldly toward the table.

There was an authentic sense of respect for Rogaro as he took his place at the table, letting his spider-like fingers crawl to touch those of the General to his left and one of the lieutenants to his right. He could feel a strange power broiling within his veins as he made contact with the other two men, a power that was his alone to possess and which would soon be playing its part in this dark experiment.

Behind Rogaro, to one side of the now-darkened fireplace, the mute servant Morley took his position, standing motionless and silent like some human sculpture, his large body barely visible in the darkness.

"Now I shall perform the first phase of the procedure," Rogaro said, turning to make eye contact with everyone seated at the table. "The summoning of Victor Frankenstein's spirit. The power to accomplish that exists within me alone. But I require the assistance of all of you to bring that spirit back to this plane of reality. All of you must remain absolutely quiet and concentrate, as you have never done so before. Concentrate on the bones of Victor Frankenstein, which you have all seen. Let their skeletal features be branded into your consciousness. And mentally say his name, over and over. And under no circumstance break this circle until I command you to do so. Is that all understood?"

The General, then all of the others, nodded their heads.

"Then prepare yourself to concentrate... all of you. And I warn you, break your concentration at any moment, or utter a single sound, and Frankenstein's spirit may be lost to us for all eternity."

The assembled group of soldiers nodded again.

"Then let's get on with it," the General said, impatient. He looked around the table, then glanced back at the skeleton in the casket as if to assure himself that the skeleton had not somehow already come to life and had walked away. Satisfied that the bones were still in place, he looked toward Rogaro and, with a quick movement of his head, signaled

him to begin.

"Now concentrate!" the robed man commanded with even more authority than the General. "Concentrate on the bones of Frankenstein!"

Rogaro did not speak again. His head, however, began to move, very slowly at first but rhythmically, making small circles in the air, until finally dropping limply against his chest, eyes shut in a deep trance.

There was no way to calculate the time that transpired while Rogaro remained in this seemingly lifeless state.

Everyone at the table began to grow restless. No one, however, expressed his uneasiness for fear of disturbing the old man's condition and disrupting what he was attempting to do, thereby securing a death warrant.

And all the while, like some immobile guard, Morley watched his master from the shadows.

Finally, perhaps an hour later, the withered eyelids of Rogaro slowly opened and his blackish orbs seemed, in the bluish moonlight, to glow in the dark. His skull-like head and then his body began to vibrate as his own concentration on the entity known as Victor Frankenstein attained its feverish crescendo. Then the room, as if the ground below was in the grip of a minor earth tremor, began to vibrate in synchronization with the wizard's own form.

The shriveled mouth of the old man opened.

"Victor Frankenstein!" he shouted, startling the other people seated around the table. I feel your presence! You are with us!"

Everyone in the room felt the thrill of terror rising up and down his spine. For every one of them suddenly now knew that something other than themselves was present in the room. Something becoming rapidly stronger, something being drawn into their reality from some realm they could not even imagine. Something real yet intangible, something resisting, fighting to remain free of the limbo state that the sorcerer was imposing upon it.

"Victor Frankenstein," Rogaro repeated, his voice softer this time, "you must abide by my will. You cannot resist the power inside of me and that siphoned off from the others who form this unholy circle. You will not resist. You will do as my mind... my words... my will... my very being commands!"

The medium's head was now quivering almost mechanically as Rogaro turned with eyes almost blazing toward the bone-filled coffin. Then he tore his hands free from the

two soldiers, at the same time pressing their hands together to preserve the integrity of the circle, and gripped the rough curving edge of the table.

Again the wizard's chin dipped to his chest.

With that, the atmosphere of the room was suddenly invaded by a strange odor, a sweet aroma wafted about the table, playing around the nostrils of every man seated there.

Morley, also noticing the smell, stirred slightly from his place of vigilance.

Keeping silent as instructed, the General and his men gradually focused their attention upon the medium's body, which began to sizzle with a vapor that seemed to be emitted from his pores, a substance reeking of that same honeyed smell. The misty substance - Rogaro's ectoplasm, the General reasoned - seemed to form an amorphous cloud that, for almost half a minute, hovered above the wizard's body. Then, as if guided by some kind of intelligence, the transparent cloud drifted across the room and hung in the air just above Frankenstein's coffin.

The soldiers, maintaining their silence, could not resist gazing towards the casket.

The ectoplasm was already twisting and churning and entering the old wooden receptacle.

The General, believing that breaking the circle now would have no further impact on the ritual, finally got up from his chair and stared into the coffin. What he beheld seemed to chill the marrow in his own bones and freeze the blood in his veins and arteries. His nerves were being taxed to their limits also. For what he was now witnessing simply could not be happening!

The misty substance that had emerged from Rogaro's body was winding its way between and through the skeleton, bringing back into perfect articulation the disjointed bones. The ectoplasm was also becoming denser, solidifying, building up and replicating itself, forming protoplasm, cells, organs, and finally the fleshy epidermis and hair of a human being. Minutes later, all of the bony material in the coffin had been covered by the spectral substance. When the last of the ectoplasm had accomplished its work, the skeleton from more than two centuries ago was no longer in the coffin to be seen. In its place now reclined the naked form of a man, his eyes closed either in slumber or in death.

The man could have been either in his late twenties or possibly older, for his face - a handsome and aristocratic one - was lined by premature aging.

Behind him, the General heard the

sounds of chairs sliding against the floor and boots shuffling as he left the table to join him. He also heard the sound of Rogaro moaning as he obviously returned from his trance back to full awareness.

The man in the coffin suddenly opened his eyes wide, a look of horror stamped on them as he stared up at the group of uniformed men gazing down at him. Slowly, gradually, he gripped the sides of the casket and pulled himself to a sitting position.

Rogaro, now entirely awake, pushed his way through the group of soldiers to behold the man now looking in terror about the room. There was a proud smile on the wizard's face. And he seemed to enjoy seeing the shocked look of the man seated in the coffin.

"Hello," the wizard finally spoke to the man. "You are Victor Frankenstein,

are you not? I am Rogaro, a man of sorcery... and I have brought you back from the dead."

The man in the casket still did not speak. Nor did he remain silent. For, upon considering the weight of Rogaro's words and became painfully aware of his situation, he opened wide his mouth and gave out a blood-freezing shriek that resounded throughout the castle.

Rogaro grinned, knowing that he had accomplished the impossible: Victor Frankenstein, a man who had perished more than two centuries ago, was alive again!

CHAPTER III:

VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN

Early half an hour had passed before Victor Frankenstein made another sound, and that was simply to speak, in a deep and dolorous tone, the name of "Elizabeth."

Frankenstein was now clothed in attire that the General had brought in the wagon, including an immaculately white surgical smock. He was sitting in an antique wooden chair set in the center of the workshop in the place where, only a short while ago, his coffin had occupied its place of honor. Sipping hot coffee from one of Rogaro's earthenware cups, he presented the dignified image of the



doctor he had, in his previous life, never officially become. Watching his every movement from various positions in the room were the wizard, Morley, the General and the latter's soldiers.

Even now that the coffee had somewhat refreshed the man, it was still impossible to determine his true age. His body having been recreated accurately down to the last cell, his face and flesh reflected the hardships imposed upon his previous existence. The ravages of his first life - of working long hours without sleep, of his travels around the world, of the biting cold of the frozen North - had visibly all taken their toll, as did the relentless stress that had overcome him since that November night of so long ago when he brought to life the thing that he had created.

Although he should have been a relatively young man, Victor Frankenstein seemed to have aged well beyond the chronological years of his original life span. His eyes were cold, emotionless, staring blankly about his new surroundings. There was indeed a history in those eyes, a long one laced with terror, an existence the likes of which no other being upon this planet had ever experienced. Frankenstein's face was prematurely lined and there were silvery gray streaks intermingled with his dark hair. His face preserved an expression that was totally lacking in any human emotion. Had he not

already spoken at least one word, the man would probably have been diagnosed as in a state of shock.

By now the General was quickly growing impatient. He continued shifting his attention from the man in the doctor's smock to his wristwatch and then back again.

"What the hell is taking him so long to talk to us?" the military leader shouted across the room to Rogaro. "He just sits there ... for almost thirty minutes now. Staring." Then he began to curse under his breath in a language that Rogaro, even with his vast knowledge of so many things, did not comprehend.

A few of the soldiers under the General's command tried to conceal their smiles.

"Don't worry, Comrade General," said Rogaro in an attempt to calm the military leader down, "but remember what has occurred here. Try to understand what he has just been through. His soul has been separated from his body for more than two hundred years. And it has been at peace. Then suddenly it is seized by forces unknown and thrust back into a body that died so long ago. He must have time to return to his senses."

"We don't have that much time," the General insisted.

The assemblage of people waited a while longer, everyone still marveling at what had so recently taken place in this room. What had, a half hour ago, just been a collection of dry and brittle bones was now a living man seated in their midst. The soldiers in particular were finding it most difficult to accept what their own eyes had witnessed. Several of them even considered the possibility that they had all been tricked by this sorcerer, that they were victims of some kind of incredible illusion perpetrated by Rogaro. It was not, after all, too far-fetched to add mass hypnosis to this wizard's list of talents. Perhaps that was not really Victor Frankenstein sitting there drinking coffee but some artificial construction or trick of the light.

This was all incredible, unbelievable, impossible.

Yet in their souls they knew that what they believed to have seen actually did take place. This was Victor Frankenstein!

There was no longer any time to contemplate the reality or unreality of Rogaro's black magic. Victor Frankenstein's lips were beginning to twitch as he set aside his empty coffee cup.

"Look, comrades," the General started, walking towards the seated man, "He is finally going to speak!"

The other people in the room, with the

elderly wizard and his servant in the lead, approached the sitting figure and crowded around him.

Looking up at the people surrounding him, Victor Frankenstein spoke. "I ... I ..." he began slowly, uncertainly at first, his face remaining almost immobile and his voice devoid of any emotion, "I know who I am, I am ... Victor Frankenstein."

"Tell us something we don't already know" returned the General, the familiar grin returning to his roundish face. The unbearable waiting seemed to be over and he knew that success in this project was imminent. There would be no embarrassing reports to his superiors if matters continued to progress smoothly. He took in a deep breath and let it out with a loud sound of relief, sounding as if his own life had just been returned to him.

"I don't understand," said Frankenstein, slowly turning his head toward the man that just spoke to him.

"Greetings, Comrade Frankenstein," the General said, beaming. "Welcome to the Twenty-first century!"

For the first time since his resurrection, Frankenstein's expression changed. His eyes blinked and a look of wonder appeared on his face. That look was subsequently replaced by one of astonishment, then of disbelief.

"The Twenty-first ... I'm afraid I am confused," the scientist from another time said slowly and deliberately. "Your words are strange to me. Everything here is so strange. So confusing. I feel as though I'd been drifting ... floating forever, it seemed. And then suddenly I felt ... I don't know why, reborn."

"What you experienced is all true," the military leader went on, bringing his body almost to a position of attention.

Frankenstein's eyes blinked again several times. Then his expression quickly changed to one of complete horror. His hands tightened upon the wooden arms of his chair. His somber eyes widened, seemed to enflame with a rage that could have been welling up within his spirit for more than two centuries.

"Good God!" Frankenstein shouted so loud that his voice echoed against the bare walls of the castle. "I remember now! I died!

In the frozen reaches of the Arctic, to which I'd tracked the hideous Fiend ... that Demon I created!"

"Yes, Victor Frankenstein," the General replied, recalling what he knew of this man's history.



"And ... you know me?"

"Your story is very well known," Rogaro joined in the conversation. "You pursued the Monster - the being you assembled from the dead - to the frozen North, which, in your century, was still mostly unexplored territory. There, amid the ice and biting Arctic winds, you were picked up by a ship commanded by an explorer named Captain Robert Walton. You did, in fact, die aboard that vessel. After you died, the Monster looked down upon your corpse for one last look at his creator."

"But how do you know all this?" asked Frankenstein, amazed by what he was hearing.

"Walton reported the events that you related to him and those that he experienced himself to a young writer then named Mary Godwin, later Mary Shelley. She, in turn, wrote up the bizarre events into the form of a novel - one that, I might add, is still read today. If you like, I can later let you read Mary's account for yourself."

Frankenstein's face twisted into a mask of remorse. He looked away from the

General and again stared off into space. His mind conjured up images from his own past, images of pain and horror, all of them the result of his own mad ambition and experimentation.

"The world *knows* of what I did!" he said. "It knows of the blood that was shed ... by friends, by those I loved, the blood of my beloved Elizabeth ..." Suddenly Frankenstein's imagination was invaded by a terrible, yellow-skinned visage, a patchwork of stitches and scars with a cruel smile twisting its straight black lips.

Again the resurrected scientists faced the General. "That Demon!" he said, making the word sound like an obscenity. "The foul fiend that I created with these two hands." He held out his hands dramatically, palms turned upward, for the military man to inspect. "Created from death ... as I became a human ghoul, stealing my raw materials from the graves, morgues, galleys, the chancel houses, slaughterhouses, too, anywhere and everywhere I could find the ghastly parts. I believed that my death would redeem me for all the murders committed by that living horror. And now, I live again! Oh, the supreme irony! Is this now to be my final punishment for playing at being God ... living again to experience the guilt all over again?"

"No need to be so melodramatic," said the General. "We all know what you've been through in the past. That's not important. What is happening *now* is our only concern - and how that involves you."

"But what could you be interested in that would involve me - and how did you bring me back?" Frankenstein looked around the room. "I see nothing here that could be used in reviving the dead."

Rogaro stepped closer to the scientist, his skeletal form only inches away. He rested a cold, bony hand on the man's shoulder and tried to speak with as much warmth and compassion that he could, despite the shrill sound of his voice.

"I have restored you to life, Victor Frankenstein. I, Rogaro. You may regard me as a wizard or sorcerer or magician, whatever term you prefer. I brought you back not using your own scientific methods, but by more ancient ... and mystical techniques."

"Black magic!" said Frankenstein, impressed and interested.

"In a sense," Rogaro went on, "but know that your resurrection is not a part of any eternal punishment for any sins against nature. You have been brought back to the world of the living for a purpose."

"A purpose?" Frankenstein asked,

confused.

"Yes!" burst in the General, his raucous voice bellowing through the workshop. "A very special purpose."

"I'm afraid I do not understand," said the man in the laboratory smock.

"Then I will make it clear to you," said the General, obviously delight in knowing that he would soon be dominating the destiny of this great scientist. He then proceeded to explain in great detail the plan he had already relayed to Rogaro - how his superiors' desired to obtain an army of slow-thinking slave warriors made from the parts of the dead.

As the military official spoke his final words of explanation, Victor Frankenstein became enraged, screaming, "No! No, never! I'll never do such filthy work again. *Never!*"

With that, Frankenstein bolted out of the chair, his arms flailing about wildly, lashing out at anyone and anything within his reach. With the strength of one possessed, the scientist pushed aside the General, then flung his hand across a table, scattering several flasks containing contents known only to the wizard. The soldiers in the room tensed up, began to move toward the white-clad man.

Clasping his hands tightly together, Rogaro commanded: "Morley!"

Instantly the grunting servant with the pockmarked face was on the scene, his muscular arms enveloping the scientist like the halves of some living vise. Raving like a lunatic, Frankenstein tried to break free. Yet despite his most desperate attempts to escape from Morley's steel-like grip, he remained securely trapped.

"There now," said the General, dusting himself off and regaining his composure, "we'll have no more of such outbursts." He signaled his men to stay back away from the conflict.

The dim-witted servant grinned and faced his master, Frankenstein still held firmly against his powerful body. Rogaro displayed his approval by a slow nod of his skull-like head.

The General marched up to the still-struggling Frankenstein and commanded Morley, "Make him sit down and stay sitting down."

The towering servant shoved the scientist back into the chair, pressing both hands tightly about the smaller man's shoulders. Another unintelligible sound rumbled from Morley's mouth, giving Frankenstein a warning not to indulge himself in another such outburst.

"And now, Victor Frankenstein," said the General, beginning to pace about the room,

only to look occasionally back into the watery eyes of the seated scientist, "we will pick up where we left off. I suggest that you will be more comfortable if you just sit back, relax and seriously consider your position in these present surroundings."

The General waited until Frankenstein had time to clear is mind of any conflicting thoughts and had settled down; then he explained how the scientist would never know eternal peace, that he would be forever trapped in this world of the living, if he refused to create this army of patchwork warriors.

"So you see, Comrade Frankenstein," he said, "you really have no choice."

Frankenstein stared about the room, taking note of the looming sorcerer, the General and the soldiers. The scientist knew that he was entirely in their power and at their mercy. Behind him, Morley continued to execute the pressure that kept him confined to the chair.

"You say that, if I do this blasphemous thing for you," he said, "that I will eventually be returned to the realm from which you stole my soul?"

"That is what I meant, Comrade Frankenstein," the General said, placing his hands on his wide hips.

"Why should I believe that evil men such as yourselves would honor that agreement?" asked the scientist. "Even if I did everything you demand?"

The General smiled, a sinister glint in his eyes. "That, my dear Frankenstein, is your problem, not ours. But remember this: If you do what we want and are successful, you have one thing in your favor. You have hope. It may be a slight hope, but it is hope nonetheless. Refuse to cooperate with us and I guarantee that you spirit will be hopelessly lost."

"That is true," Rogaro interjected. "For I will ensure that your soul remains trapped within that ectoplasmic body for all time, even after my eventual death. Yours will be a living death - an eternity to contemplate your sins and to battle with your own conscience. An eternity to dwell upon the horrors perpetrated by the Monster you created. An eternity of guilt and none of the spiritual rest to which you have become accustomed."

"One more thing," added the General. "Your 'Demon' - the thing that you created - until just recently still walked this Earth. Perhaps, if he is as resilient as you seem to have made him, he still does."

Frankenstein's attention peaked at the General's words. "The fiend? Still alive?"

"Yes, Victor Frankenstein," said the General, who proceeded to relate what he

knew of the Monster's recent revival. "The Monster may have survived the explosion that some believe destroyed him forever. But you know how tough that creature is. You gave it a superhuman body that can take the most extreme punishment ... and a life force that can never be entirely put out. Its individual components had already suffered death before you gave them reanimation. Now only a force more powerful than the Monster himself can destroy him."

"The Monster ... alive ..."

"Just think of it, Comrade Frankenstein," said the General, moving closer to the scientist. "Think how both you and your creation will live throughout eternity with the responsibility of every crime committed by his giant hands falling upon your already guilt-ridden spirit."

"Eternity provides ample time for an infinite amount of horrors," added Rogaro, "and an equal amount of guilt."

"Every murder, every new atrocity further staining your own soul."

Victor Frankenstein's face lost all expression. He knew that everything that the General and the wizard had told him was true. There was nothing he could do but remain a helpless toy in the hands of his captors.

"You are correct," said Frankenstein, "I accept that I have no choice."

"Ah, in addition to being a brilliant scientist, you are also a wise man," said the General.

"Just tell me what you want me to do."

"It is a simple plan, really," the official said. "Our army must be made from parts of many deadmen, preferably the remains of soldiers who died in combat. For a start the cemetery belonging to the town below this hill will provide your raw materials. The soldiers you create must be subservient to my commands."

"And how can I ensure that?" asked Frankenstein. "Remember what happened in regards the first being I created."

"You will perform an operation on each one of their brains," replied the General. "You will remove a portion of those brains in a procedure we call a prefrontal lobotomy. In doing this you will make certain that our soldiers are basically no more than docile human vegetable programmed to carry out the orders of their superiors. They will fight and kill upon command, asking no questions and offering no resistance. Your work will begin with the creation of a half dozen of these soldiers. You will assemble them and bring them to life. And once we are sure that they are functioning correctly, you will build six more ... and then six more ..."

"And will there ever be enough?" Frankenstein attempted rising to his feet but was still held down by the giant Morley.

Assuming that the scientist would not try another escape, Rogaro nodded to his servant.

Obedient, Morley relaxed his grip, allowing Victor Frankenstein to stand in the midst of the assemblage of men.

Taking his chin in his hand, the scientist thought for several moments, and then spoke. "First I will need corpses," he said without emotion. "Many corpses, so I can choose the best parts that will eventually be incorporated into the first six creatures."

"How many?" queried the General.

"Many. It's impossible to give a precise number until I've seen their condition. I only pray we don't need too many to create the first six. Bring me at least a half dozen for now and we shall see what we have. The best parts of each cadaver will be selected, so that our final results will be ideal. Powerful hands, strong legs, the faces won't matter. They must be relatively fresh, not too decomposed. Yes, six good specimens should start us off, but then we'll require more. They will provide the bases from which I can work ... expand upon and build upon."

"Done!" the General said, turning to his men, standing tall and proud.

The two young lieutenants exchanged fearful looks. They had joined this rebel army to fight their cause's enemies, not to rob graves. Nevertheless, they knew what their new orders were to be.

"Take shovels," said the leader, his voice loud and commanding. "They are all in the wagon, which you will drive to the local cemetery. You already know where that is. Take them and take this dumb servant with you, too. Now, while it's dark. And don't come back until you have six good corpses, as fresh as you can find them. Do I make myself clear?"

"Yes, Comrade General," one of the lieutenants replied in a noticeably wavering voice. Clearly the officer wanted to object, but knew that his refusal or reluctance to carry out this order could easily result in his instant execution.

"We shall do our best," added the other lieutenant.

Making a formal about-face, the two lieutenants departed from the castle, Morley trailing behind them. Rogaro, the General and the other men could hear the whinies of the horses and the turning of the wheels as the creaking wagon rolled off along the primitive track to vanish into the dense Crovavian woods.

"That is not all," Victor Frankenstein spoke

again.

"I assumed it would not be," the General responded, as if aware of what the scientist was about to say next.

"I cannot bring life to the dead using Rogaro's methods," he said. "I am a scientist not a magician. I require equipment not magic wands and crushed bat's wings. Electrical apparatus, the tools and ingredients of the chemist ..."

"That will be no problem," said the military leader. "Just tell me what you need and I shall have it sent to you." He looked about the workshop. "This room is large enough to be converted into your laboratory. Perhaps it will not be as elaborate or well-stocked as your original laboratory in Ingolstadt, and yet perhaps, given the strides science has made during the past two hundred years, maybe it will be even better."

Rogaro offered Victor Frankenstein a pad of writing paper and a quill pen. "Here," the sower said, "write down what you need."

And Frankenstein proceeded to jot down the list of scientific equipment he felt would be needed to complete his experiment. Most of the electrical items on the scientist's list would prove to be obsolete, some of it more than a century ago.

"Don't worry," the General assured him as he took away the list, "whatever we can't get we'll replace with something more up to date."

"But what of your notes?" asked Rogaro. "Unfortunately Mary Shelley never recorded them ... if she ever knew them at all ... when she wrote up your story."

"I had a journal which, I assume, is now lost to history," Frankenstein answered. "But all the steps in creating my first living being are indelibly burned into my memory. They have virtually become a part of me. Have no fear, I can perform this work without the need for notes."

"Splendid, splendid," the General said showing his pearly teeth. "Then I shall send for the supplies and equipment immediately." With those words said, the commanding officer instructed his men on how to acquire the things needed for the creation of life.

Frankenstein stepped closer to Rogaro. "You are obviously an alchemist," Frankenstein said. "I assume you already have, here in your work shop, some of the chemicals that I will be requiring for this experiment. If you don't mind, I should like to look around to see what is already available to me."

"By all means," said Rogaro, smiling and gesturing about the room.

"Then, gentlemen, if you will excuse me, I

would like to begin. For there is much work to be done. And the sooner I complete this terrible task for you, the better."

Victor Frankenstein turned away from the others and silently approached the nearest table, his expressionless eyes examining the first colorful array of chemicals.

CHAPTER IV:

THE PRISONER

Dawn had settled over the cramped jailhouse. The building appeared to be as old as the small town itself, although the town had to be centuries younger than the castle beyond the woods. The old structure was located on the outskirts of the residential section, backed by greenish hills and arboreal splendor. Few areas of central Europe had remained this untouched by the pollution of civilization into this century.

The jail, although a relic of some earlier time, was nevertheless maintained to the fullest. Its condition was nearly as good as on the day of its construction. Naturally the stone walls had been eroded down by the elements over the passage of so many decades. But its sturdy iron bars were still secure enough to confine even the most physically strong of unwilling tenants.

Wilhelm Warren gripped tightly the rough bars of his jail cell, his hard fingers perspiring and sliding against the cold metal. A burning hatred flared in his dark blue eyes. The young man pressed his ruggedly handsome face against the bars so that his black beard, grown longer over his past week of confinement, was parted by the presence of the bars.

The prisoner could see that his keeper, actually a soldier in the invading army, was sitting in his usual place, the old chair at the far end of the corridor. Like most of the time, the middle-aged man was engrossed in one of the tattered paperback novels he had purchased by mail order from the United States. He was wearing, as always, that hatefully familiar uniform of that army, glancing up occasionally to check up on the man behind the bars.

Finally, the jailer closed the book, set it on his desk and focused his eyes on Wilhelm. Rising to his booted feet, the uniformed man strode toward the jail cell. He stopped a good yard away from the bars and, for security, rested his right hand upon the handle of his holstered service pistol.

"Ah, Comrade Warren, the jailer said, beaming at his helpless prisoner, "and how was your this fine morning. Up rather early, aren't you?"

Wilhelm's eyes narrowed. And the jailer

could almost feel the hatred radiating from those slits to sear through his own eyes.

"Don't call me your comrade, you scum!" Wilhelm exclaimed, clutching the bars even tighter. The naked walls of the jail provided excellent acoustics, making his voice sound as if the man had spoken in some vast cavern.

The jailer grinned, for he was in complete control of this situation. He could say or do anything he chose, providing he remained out of his prisoner's reach.

"Now, now, Comrade Warren," the latter said, jovially this time, "that's no way to talk. Remember that if you had not resisted our forces in the first place ... not insisted on spewing your lies of propaganda ... if you had in fact become a true comrade and embraced us, you wouldn't be in this fix. You'd be out there," he pointed toward the cell's barred window, where the morning sunlight was streaming in and across the dank floor, "not cooped up in here."

Wilhelm Warren spit between the bars, forcing the jailer to quickly step back to avoid being hit. A sudden look of anger over swept the soldier's face, then metamorphosed to a sly grin.

"Try that again, comrade, and I will forget that my orders were to keep you alive," he said.

"Forget anything you like," said Wilhelm, "but I will never forget the likes you ... and I'll never submit to you, either." For several moments the young man stared at his captor's uniform, the design of which he had grown to despise as more time ticked by. "I fought you and your kind on the outside. And I'll fight you from here, too, if I can. And if I ever do get out of this damned cell, I'll gather others who believe as I do ... and together we'll drive you out of our beloved Crovakia!"

"That way will never come," posited the jailer. "For what will you use to resist us? We marched into your streets mere days ago. And a few days from now, more of us will be here. We have arsenals of weapons at our disposal, enough fire power to snuff out you and your kind without working up a sweat. What will you fight back with - clubs and garden rakes?"

"We'll fight them with courage and a love for this land."

"Hah! You'll need more than that. Most of your people have already given up, admitting it's better to be a live comrade than a dead patriot. My advice - face up to the reality of your situation and join the ranks. And someday you'll thank me for it."

Grimacing, Wilhelm responded, "You should know me well enough by now to understand that I'd willingly die the most

horrible death that you and your ... 'comrades' might devise for me."

"And believe me," the jailer said, smiling, "that can certainly be arranged."

"I've faced death many times. In this town. In those woods. You and your men cannot scare me anymore. Remember, I can only die once."

"Yes," the soldier resumed gleefully, "just once. But how you can die! The General has a talent for making one death seem like a thousand ... and stretch that death out for at least several days. Think it over, my friend. Maybe you'll change your mind. Perhaps, before much longer, you'll join us after all ... comrade."

Again hearing that final word, Wilhelm Warren thrust his muscular arm between the cell bars. His powerful fingers, their tips worn down to calluses after years of toiling in the fields of his small farm, sought the throat of his keeper. But there was no contact made, as the guard, laughing tauntingly, was standing several inches beyond his reach.

"Try again next time, Comrade Warren," the jailer laughed. "By then maybe our excellent prison food will have made you - and your reach - grow some, eh?" Turning his back to the cell, the soldier marched back to his chair, sat down and resumed reading his book.

It was a feeling of despair that Wilhelm Warren let go of the bars and returned to the hard wooden bench that constituted his musty cell's only furnishing. The bench had been set against the wall, now bathed in the morning light streaming in through the cell's only window. Wilhelm did not have a wristwatch and, from where his cell was located, he could not see the clock hanging on the wall behind the jailer's desk. The only way of estimating the time of day was by the position of the sun, and that was only possible when the sun was visible from his side of the building.

A full week had passed since Wilhelm Warren was incarcerated, but he had already abandoned chalking down the dates on the cell wall.

Seated on the bench, Wilhelm returned to one of his more frequent activities during his confinement - brooding. He recalled with nausea the way that these invaders had marched into the town several weeks ago, their drawn weapons firing at the first signs of any resistance. He thought of his farm, which until now had provided so many of his needs, and wondered if the General and his men had allowed it to exist following his arrest. And he thought of the fate of Crovakia, where he had lived since his birth in the town thirty-two

years ago.

Most of all, however, Wilhelm thought of the one person who meant the most to him and for whom he really lived, his precious young sister Katherine.

For a long time the prisoner's thoughts dwelt on Katherine. Then he remembered with great emotional pain his many friends who had already given their lives in violent resistance to the invading army.

As he continued to brood over the events of the recent past, the hours passing slowly, the light from his window began to fade and the day drew to its close. The sky, by now, had already grown dark and the full moon was on the rise.

At first Wilhelm did not notice the faint sound from outside – a faint *tap tap tap* against the stony outer wall. Nor did the prisoner pay attention to the quiet disturbance until two more sounds were made by tiny missiles that flew against his window's bars, now silhouetted like small black pillars against the large moon.

Finally, his attention aroused, Wilhelm stood up and, careful not to arouse the suspicion of his only guard, casually gazed outside the window.

The sight which greeted him from outside was heart-warming, but still it made him suddenly afraid.

"What are you doing here?" Wilhelm whispered discreetly to the three men standing outside in the moonlight. They all had familiar faces and were clothed in the typical peasant garb of the Crovastian farm people. Wilhelm let one word rapidly follow the next as he said, "You could get killed. Remember, you're still wanted men for resisting the occupation. This is the worst place you could possibly be."

One of the men smiled, apparently unafraid. He raised a hand to the cell so that Wilhelm was able to get a good view of the three sticks of dynamite that were bound together with a reasonably long fuse. This gesture precluded any need to speak and possibly arouse the suspicion of Wilhelm's jailer.

Wilhelm shook his head. "You can't be serious!" he gasped in a sotto voice, his eyes focused on the dynamite sticks. "Yes, you can get me out of here. But the blast will arouse the entire army. When that happens, none of us will have a chance."

But the three men were unaffected by Wilhelm's protestations. Obviously they were determined to free him from that gloomy cell and nothing he could say would alter that decision.

Finally another of the threesome edged

closer to the cell window, as the man with the dynamite began setting the explosives on the ground against the building wall, while the third man served as lookout.

"Wilhelm," he said, his words barely audible, "we must get you out of there now. Our people need you. You are a natural-born leader and they will help carry on the fight against these monsters if you are the one giving the orders. Katherine needs you too."

For several moments, Wilhelm's face seemed to pale, although the effort might have been a trick of the moonbeams falling upon it.

"How is...how is my sister?" he asked after a silent pause, his mind reflecting upon her near-angelic image.

"She is fine," the farmer said while the other two men continued their work, "at least for now. The soldiers have been trying their hardest to win the people over to their side without further bloodshed. One way they are doing this is by allowing those who do not resist or protest to live comfortably and unmolested. Katherine, as you know, does not have the means to resist them anyway. So, she has pretended to agree with them and their philosophies and has therefore earned the right to live in peace. Nevertheless, she is young and beautiful, and the soldiers are, after all, men..."

Wilhelm bit his lower lip, trying not to imagine what his friend was intimating. "What is Katherine doing now?" he quietly asked.

"Mostly waiting for you to return to her. That's another reason why you can't stay here. Katherine needs you."

The man's words were true, Wilhelm now knew.

"Be careful," he whispered, encouraging the men outside, watching as one of them struck a wooden match against the wall and brought it to the fuse. Then the three farmers ran away from the building, stopping a safe distance away.

At the same time Wilhelm rushed to the other end of the jail cell, pressing his back against the bars of the door. For the next fifteen seconds the only sound that he could detect was the sizzle of the fuse burning away.

Then, a protracted instant later, the jail wall exploded in a deafening blast that hurled three smoking chunks of stone, each comprising a half dozen or more cemented bricks, along with a halo of powdered debris, in every direction. Wilhelm shielded himself with his arms and briefly shut his eyes as protection against the explosion, only a few pieces of shattered brick striking him.

Even before the smoke began to clear, Wilhelm could hear the loudly cursing jailer rushing toward the cell. A quick glance out the cell door revealed that the soldier was already drawing his service gun. Seconds later a bullet whizzed just inches away from his ear, striking what remained of the destroyed cell wall.

"Come on!" Wilhelm exclaimed to his friends sounding like a born leader, as he bolted toward the huge opening in the wall and into the moonlight. "This place will be swarming with soldiers in no time! Head for the woods as fast as you can!"

Already it was too late!

The area around the jailhouse was already teeming with soldiers, too many to count in the darkness as they darted between the trees and down the town street, but too many of them, nonetheless. All of them were carrying weapons. A few of them began to fire, their minor explosions lighting up the night.

By now, Wilhelm and his three friends had reached the outskirts of the town where its paved streets were replaced by the soil and vegetation of the woods. An ear-shattering blast of machinegun fire thundered from behind, its lethal spray almost cutting two of the men's backs in half amid a spray of gushing scarlet, their bleeding corpses dropping backwards instantly.

Wilhelm experienced an agony in his gut, not from a bullet but from the knowledge that two of his friends had just died so that he and their land could be free again. But he and the remaining member of that threesome continued to run, their hearts pounding and lungs gasping for breath, as they ran deeper into the forest.

There came another burst of machinegun fire.

The man running at Wilhelm's side screamed, then dropped to the damp ground.

Wilhelm, miraculously still untouched by the soldiers' bullets, made a silent prayer and pressed onward. Perhaps, he thought as he ran, he had been spared for a purpose. Maybe what his friend had said about being a natural leader who could help to liberate his people from these oppressors was true. If so, now more than ever he had to get away from his pursuers.

Already Wilhelm was secure in the darkness of the woods, his fleeing body concealed in the forest's protective maze of vegetation. Fortunately the young man knew these woods, having played in them as a child and explored them as an adult. In previous years, the forest had been a source of adventure or offered him a place where he could be alone with his thoughts. Tonight, he

pryed, they would be his salvation.

For at least an hour Wilhelm wandered among the familiar moon-bathed greens, watching and waited, remaining undetected, while the soldiers prowled about in an attempt to hunt him down. He guessed that, before much more time passed, the soldiers would realize the futility in trying to find someone who knew virtually every weed and root in these shadowed woods. Indeed, as he watched the soldiers search, the young man could discern their growing lack of enthusiasm for their hunt. Gradually, one by one, the uniformed men began to turn around and head back toward the town.

Wilhelm sat down on a large, twisting root, which, as a child, had been for him a pirate's plank. He breathed deeply the pure night air, content that, at least for the present, he was a free man. Free to return to his beloved Katherine before the soldiers realized the connection between him and his sister and punished her for his escape in some terrible way he did not even want to contemplate.

He thought again of his three countrymen, their bullet-torn bodies not yet cold.

And for a long while he remained alone, accompanied only by his melancholic thoughts. As soon as he regained his breath and composure he would be off again, trudging through these dark yet moonlit woods.

Wilhelm Warren finally emerged from the shadows of the forest. He was on the verge of exhaustion, his legs weary, his stomach craving a decent meal. The man stopped at the long stretch of beach that separated the woods from his own property just a half-mile away. For a while he gazed off toward the dark waters of the lake. Indeed, the moon's reflection, rippling along its gently tossing surface, was the first truly beautiful sight to behold since his incarceration.

Looking at the lake had often been his release from the tensions of the day and the routine of working his farm. The slow movement of the water had always had a remarkably soothing effect upon the spirit of this young Crovakian. Now, as he had done so many times before, Wilhelm gazed at the numerous spikes of dark rock that jutted above the lake's surface, trying to let his troubles to drift away with the motion of the water.

It was as he followed the motion of the water that his eyes suddenly bulged, reacting



to what seemed to be an impossible phenomenon cutting the surface of the lake. Wilhelm walked forward a few yards, his eyes straining to get a better look and a possible explanation for what had to be some kind of optical illusion. Yet the more he tried to rationalize what he was now seeing the more he realized that was he thought must be an illusion was, in fact, real.

Rising from the placid waters what appeared to be an enormous sea serpent!

The beams of the moon revealed the thing from the sea. And there was no mistaking its fantastic appearance. The creature was

extremely long, perhaps, he judged from this distance, anywhere from seventy-five to a hundred feet. High spines ran down the thing's back and tail, almost like the dorsal fin of some mythological fish. The enormous head, with its gaping, tooth-filled mouth, possessed wide-open eyes that shined in the dark like twin beacons of crimson fire.

There had never been any stories of sea monsters in this area, Wilhelm pondered.

Rushing over rocks, careful to take advantage of the concealing darkness, Wilhelm continued to watch. The thing was moving, slowly but certainly, closer to the

shore now. And as it got nearer to the land, he could hear that it was emitting a strange, alien humming sound. At this proximity, the Crovakian was afforded a better, closer look at the monster before it vanished amid the rocks and shadows. That final observation was sufficient for Wilhelm to realize that this thing that had emerged from the lake was no sea serpent or some living remnant of a distant age.

"That's no monster!" Wilhelm gasped aloud. "It's a submarine!" With that realization a terrible thought formed in the man's mind. Was this some new weapon the invading army was now unleashing upon his homeland. If so, it was one that could not be opposed by any number of Crovakia's bravest countrymen.

Wilhelm waited on the spot for at least a quarter of an hour. From a distance he could hear the fabulous ship's whirring, followed by the echoing sound of a great *clang!* like some heavy metal door or, more likely, a hatch had just closed. Hiding behind a jagged piece of rock, he waited silently, his sharp ears listening until he heard the sound of approaching footsteps. A single, muffled voice soon joined the sounds of the footsteps, that also becoming louder.

Someone was headed his way, Wilhelm thought, occasionally peering up in hopes of getting a look at whoever it was that had emerged from the underwater ship.

Although he still could see no one, Wilhelm could now discern the voice, one speaking English. Luckily he, as most residents of this area did, understood that language quite well. But the words Wilhelm was now hearing promptly became only a secondary object of importance. What fascinated him beyond what he was hearing, almost to disbelief, was the appearance of these two latest "invaders" who could finally be perceived striding along the beach.

From their dress, and from the strange design of their vessel, the two beings were clearly not members of the General's invading army. In fact, never before had he seen anyone even remotely resembling the likes of these two.

The moonbeams provided ample light in revealing this pair of strangers from the sea.

The one seemingly leading the way was of average height and build. Walking with almost military precision, he was clothed in what appeared to be khaki army fatigues bearing no emblems or other identifying symbols. There was no way to describe his face as it was entirely concealed, mummy-like, with white bandages. Only the narrowest slits permitted the man to see out through his

wrappings.

The second man, if indeed that is what it was, towered more than two feet above his companion. To Wilhelm's regret, the visage of this taller and obviously far more muscular being was not hidden away by bandages.

His face was a pale, possibly yellow coloration, as were the enormous hands. He had what appeared in the moonlight to be a rather flattened head. The forehead was somewhat high forehead with thick, Neanderthal-like brows sloping over the eyes. The whitish eyes sockets were deep and the eyelids heavy. The forehead seemed to be literally held together by coarse stitches and moonbeam reflecting metal clamps covering a deep horizontally running gash. Equally unignorable gashes, stitched shut, could be seen running the length of the right cheek, circumventing the neck and encircling both wrists. From each temple protruded tube-like pieces of silvery metal resembling the terminals of a battery. The long hair hung in matted strands, overhanging the brow in short bangs and reaching to the broad shoulders on the sides and in back – hair as black and ominous in appearance as this stranger's ill-fitting suit of clothes.

The bandage-faced man continued to talk. The giant man parted his straight black lips, growling in response.

By now the two figures were so close to Wilhelm that no details about their appearance was concealed. Still in concealment, he suddenly felt ill beholding the bigger man's terrible features. At this distance, the being appeared more like some living corpse than a real human being, its death-like skin clinging close to the skull beneath. He could also see that this creature had the physical strength to tear him – or



anyone – apart simply using his hands. In that moment, the General and his band of killers seemed to be a less imposing threat.

Wilhelm now wanted only one thing, to get back to Katherine and spirit her away, not only from the invading army but, more imminently, from any possible contact with these two bizarre characters.

But emerging from concealment now would mean his discovery and probably his death. Thus, Wilhelm Warren continued to watch from behind the rocks that, for now at least, offered him protection. And so, he listened intently to what the man with the bandaged face had to say.

CHAPTER V:

THE STRANGERS FROM THE SEA

The Frankenstein Monster walked awkwardly about the sand and rocks of the beach, his heavy elevated boots crushing anything of small size that strayed into his way. This creature that had been given life by a mortal man over two hundred

years ago halted, looking around at his present surroundings, the moonlight beaming down upon his colossal frame. One gigantic hand slowly lifted, the long, black-nailed fingers as if trying to capture the reflected illumination.

The other man, Captain James Judson of the nuclear-powered submarine *Tylosaur*, sat down on a cold boulder about a hundred feet distant from where the water was washing against the beach. A hidden smile appeared on his bandaged face as he observed the Monster's actions.

"Ah, my friend," the captain said, as the giant continued to reach out for his intangible phantoms, "if only one could catch the moonbeams. Perhaps this ugly world would be a far better place."

Judson no longer wore the uniform of OGRE, that organization of madmen in which he was once a proud and loyal member. He and the Monster were now the only beings alive from that group that still lived, and even their survival was short of a miracle.

But Judson could now see that his monstrous companion was not trying to catch the moonlight; indeed, the creature was far too intelligent to attempt such a childish feat. Rather, the Monster of Frankenstein was reacting in much the same way as he had on the submarine... when, by gesturing this way and that, he managed to influence Judson's maneuvering the great underwater vessel to these very shores.

"So..." the captain began. "You still feel those strange emanations, or whatever they are, that guided us here? And from the way you are now carrying on, I'd wager they are stronger than ever."

The giant, a living being created from countless mismatching body parts, stood there motionless, gesturing pathetically with his hands. He tried to speak, but his vocal cords, silent for so long, would not allow the words to flow.

Captain Judson grinned, the bandages covering his face rising. "You've made your point," he said. Then his thoughts again went back in time, tracing the unexplainable events that had led him and the Monster to this almost unknown state of Crovaki.

Vividly the captain recalled how he had seen the Monster ambulating after the traitorous ruler of OGRE as the latter rushed to escape his island stronghold in the organization's technologically advanced aircraft. Judson had been the only member of the organization that had demonstrated any true signs of friendship toward the creature. Also, his face, years ago, had been reduced by flames to a mask of ugliness rivaling the countenance of the

Monster himself. Thus, it was a relatively simple task for Judson to lure the giant away from their erstwhile leader and down into the cavern where the *Tylosaur* was docked. Thus, while the traitor inevitably took off alone in his aircraft, Captain Judson and the Monster hastened inside the submarine. Thus, while that aircraft ended up an explosive ball of fire and smoke and OGRE Island erupted in a small nuclear blast, the captain and his new friends escaped into the Atlantic Ocean, its waters theirs to explore and conquer.

But Judson and, he presumed, the Monster had grown weary of the chases and pursuits and wished only to find some distant and desolate land where they could live out their miserable existences without risk of being tormented by so-called "normal" humanity.

It was on the fourth day of the submarine's underwater voyage that the Monster began to act strangely. To Judson it seemed that the brute was responding to something unseen, some inexplicable vibrations that were connecting with him, perhaps summoning him. If only the Monster had retained his old power to speak, the captain thought, tell him what it was that he was feeling. At least the giant was giving Judson an approximate direction in which to take his ship.

But manning the ship by himself, without benefit of his former crew, was a difficult task. Being honest with himself, Judson had to agree that he was glad their journey — at least for the present — had come to its end. Indeed, only his own skill as a man in love with the sea allowed him to get this far, navigating the *Tylosaur* in accordance with the crude hand signals of Frankenstein's Monster.

"But wait, my friend," Captain Judson began speaking again, his voice muffled behind the bandages hiding his own grotesque features, "now that we've reached this out-of-the-way place, we'll have plenty of time to track down the origin of those weird 'signals'? As for now, the important thing is that we rest."

The Monster looked away from the moon and at Judson.

"We've had a long trip, confined in that ship. Let's just rest our weary limbs for now, enjoy the cool night air and bask in the moonlight."

Grunting in agreement, the Monster stretched his long arms, limbs that were too long for the sleeves of his black jacket. The dark lips parted and the creature yawned loudly. The barrel chest expanded, then relaxed.

The submarine captain leaned way back on a sizeable rock, resting his gauze-swathed

head against the flat stone. He let his muscles relax as best they could. For a few minutes, Judson said nothing, his attention being only on the craggy surface of the moon.

"We've already used up most of the supplies stored in the galley," Judson finally spoke again. "There wasn't much left there to begin with after the ship's last official voyage. And I'm starting to get hungry for something a little less mundane."

The Monster groaned, nodding in agreement.

"In the morning then," said Judson, still occasionally glazing up at the moon, "I'll go into town and see what I can get for us. You can remain here or aboard the ship. Even with these bandages, I'll attract less attention than you."

He withdrew a folded map from a pocket and opened it, reading it under the light of the moon.

"According to this we're not far from a town. It's just beyond that forest," he said, nodding toward a dense entanglement of vegetation. "There's enough gold in the ship's coffers to buy us what we need for a long time and maybe purchase some silence at the same time, if the merchants think they'll be doing continued business with this bandaged man."

The Monster uttered a guttural sound of agreement.

"Tomorrow, then. We'll find a shelter somewhere in this area, hopefully something more comfortable than a cave. Or maybe we'll find a cabin in the mountains. I'll get the coins from the ship. And after we're settled, I'll go into town and purchase some food. Too bad I can't take you to some fine restaurant to dine, but I think your size and appearance would... well, you know."

Another groan issued from the beast and his head nodded.

"But," said Judson, "after we hide the *Tylosaur* where no one can find it, among those rocks with most of the ship submerged, I think it's best that both of us get some sleep. We've been up for too long as it is."

Frankenstein's Monster stomped about, grasping at the air as if trying to get one last sense of those strange emanations before retiring for the night. Then, clumsily, he dropped onto a large rock and assumed a reclining position.

Meanwhile, Wilhelm Warren, who had been spying on these proceedings with much curiosity and virtually no understanding, waited until both the man in the fatigues and the ebony-clad giant settled down and went to sleep.

Then, silent and unseen, he slipped away

through the night in the direction of his farm, but most importantly, his sister Katherine.

A bizarre conversation was commencing, late the following afternoon, among the small group of Crovakan townspeople inside the combination general store and tavern. Eight seated people, three of them women, were speaking words that made even the bravest of the assemblage shiver in their leather boots.

"Did you hear?" asked Johann, a middle-aged man, turning to look up suspiciously from his chair at the table in the center of the room. Then he cast a careful glance over his shoulder, assuring that no one was spying on him that should not be present.

"Hear about what?" another one of the group, a bearded man named Gustav, replied, bracing his hands against the table in preparation for some great shock.

Johann made a face that twisted his hairless features. The other villagers leaned closer, no one wanting to miss a single word.

"Surely you must have heard what happened last night in the cemetery. Under the light of the full moon. It was in this morning's newspaper."

"What's the use of reading the newspapers?" complained an old woman in a long black peasant's dress and a scarf wrapped over her head. "All that concerns me is what is happening to our state, and you'll find no mention of that in our morning paper."

"Yes," said another man, "I read of the graveyard incident. If you ask me, it was the work of ghouls ... demons that feed on corpses ... probably cronies of that sorcerer on the hill."

"Bah!" Johann continued. "That's all superstition. There's no such thing as a ghoul. And if there were, they wouldn't tarnish their reputation by associating with Rogaro."

"Well then," the other woman asked. "Who or what did it?"

"Did what?" Gustav began. "I know nothing of what you're talking. Come on now, stop talking around everything."

"Gustav," replied Johann, eyeing him sternly, "last night a most horrible thing happened. Six graves in our sacred burial ground were violated ... their coffins opened and the bodies stolen. Six corpses missing."

"Whose?" Gustav asked, his eyes growing wide.

"Soldiers," answered Johann. "All of them local heroes. Their names have not yet been disclosed."

"It's got to be the work of ghouls," said another on the women. "That's what it is."

"She's right," said one of the men. "Who else would steal bodies?"

"Yes, ghouls, as I know the old stories, need the dead - for food."

"Shut up with your nonsense about ghouls," warned Johann. He drank down a long draft of the foamy dark beer he had just purchased at this store. "I say there's more to this than your superstitious nonsense - which is all this is, my friend, nonsense."

The group gave each other glances of suspicion, then everyone, man and woman alike, drank some of their own beer. The liquid had at least one positive effect: No one seated at the table suspected one another of being a stealer of bodies. It also quieted everyone down, at least for a while.

Gustav, annoyed by the brief silence, finally broke it. "Come on, now," he said, his voice increasing in volume, his gray mustache moving with the action of his lips, "something has to be responsible for these thefts. But what kind of creature other than a ghoul would steal a body ... and for what purpose?"

"What kind of creature?" Johann responded, his wrinkled brow wrinkling even more so that his sparse hairline seemed to move. "What kind, you ask? I'll tell you. A human ghoul. The kind of human fiend who would dig up a grave ... six graves, maybe more to come ... and steal those bodies."

"But, Gustav started, 'what in God's name for?'"

"Remember the old stories about body snatching?" Johann asked. "That practice used to be quite common long ago, when medical schools required cadavers to be cut up by teachers and their students?"

"Oh," said the black-clad woman, "for learning human anatomy."

"Exactly," added Johann. "If you ask me, I'd say we're dealing with a similar situation. I think there's some kind of medical work going on around these parts that requires the use of human bodies. Work that isn't on the up and up, if you know what I mean, and that must be done in secret ... at night."

"There's a medical school in the next town," said the proprietor. "But they have graveyards of their own. Why would anyone there come all this way to do such a job?"

Downing the last of his beer, Johann ordered a second round for himself. The man behind the bar poured him a draft and brought it over to the table, then remained there to hear more of the conversation.

The others leaned in even closer.

"If you ask me," said Johann, his voice low, almost a whisper, "it's the work of ... them."

"Them?" asked Gustav. "You mean the soldiers?"

The other men and women at the table nodded in agreement and began to complain under their breaths.

"That's what I think all right," Johann continued, being careful of his words and looking around for spies. "We've never had trouble like this in Crovackia, even with that old crazy wizard living up there. Now we have these soldiers. And soon after they come here, six of our graves are opened and robbed."

"But you still can't be certain that it was the soldiers that robbed those graves," the bartender said.

"Yes," Gustav interjected, "you have no proof. And even if you did, what could we do about it? Against the military might of the General and his cutthroats, we are almost powerless. I think it's best if we chalk this all up to coincidence that the graves were plundered so close to the soldiers' arrival in Crovackia."

Johann burped loudly from the beer, took another drink and then wiped a white foam mustache from his face. A trail of the liquid was trickling between his lips as he spoke again. "I still say it's those soldiers," he insisted, louder than before. "If it wasn't them, who else could it be?" Rogaro, despite his weird ways, has never used corpses before - at least as far as I know. Besides that, I've heard that his castle has already been occupied by the General and his men."

"And we all know each other," said one of the women. "It could never be one of us!"

Her words were still being spoken when the bell on the establishment's door rang, signaling the arrival of someone new. He was tall, dressed in army fatigues, and had his face entirely concealed by bandages. The man's mysterious appearance and his rather dramatic entry, seemingly timed to what the woman had just said, instantly aroused the attention of everyone. And as he boldly strode up the checkout counter and looked around for the store's proprietor, the assemblage suddenly knew the identity of their body snatcher.

The bartender, his eyes wide open, his jaw hanging slack, rushed up behind the counter and looked the man up and down.

"Yes?" he asked.

"I'm sorry if I startled you," spoke Captain James Judson through the gauze covering his mouth, but talking in the most pleasant-sounding voice that he could muster. "Please forgive these bandages. I was recently the unfortunate victim of an accident and, well ... let's just say that my face isn't an attractive

sight right about now. I have found it best simply to hide my features until they heal."

The combination bartender and store manager kept staring at the captain, speechless.

Johann, who had been watching this visitor's every movement, finally arose from his chair and addressed the man directly. "You are a stranger to Crovackia," he stated, his forehead wrinkling.

"That I am," answered the bandaged man. Knowing that his real name would be meaningless to these people and trying to present himself as someone who posed no threat, he added, "My name is Judson. James Judson."

"And you are," Gustav said, noting the way he was dressed, "in the army?"

"The army? Oh, my clothes. No, I just find these comfortable."

Johann's gray eyebrows arched upwards. "Hmmm ... and just where is it that you're from? And what are you doing in our town?"

Judson turned sharply towards the man that asked him the question. "Frankly, sir," he said, sternly, "I don't think that is any of your business."

Johann was speechless. For an instant or more he wanted to strike this stranger with a hard fist, maybe even with his beer glass. But there was something forboding about him, something beyond his obvious disguise that prevented the Crovackian from acting aggressively toward Judson.

Judson went back to his business with the proprietor, giving him a list of the supplies he wished to purchase. He could sense the anxiety that his own sudden appearance had caused and could only guess at the wild thoughts running rampant through the minds of this group of townspeople. He snickered almost silently beneath his bandages, for he was used to such treatment and suspicions. In fact, most of his life following his scarring accident had been spent avoiding the mocking, hating and fearing eyes of the majority of people he encountered. This incident, in this little town in Crovackia, was no exception.

"I am here to do business with you," Captain Judson told the proprietor, who was already setting down on the shelf some of the items on his list. "I need supplies, enough to last for a few weeks at least. And you need money that I can provide. I think that will make a suitable arrangement."

Still reading Judson's list, the proprietor, with some noted reluctance, proceeded to fill the rest of the order. When the shop owner had finished, two shopping bags of goods rested on the counter in front of the bandaged

man. Judson paid him slightly more than the required amount, all of it in gold coins. Their gliter immediately caught the eyes of everyone seated around the table, especially Johann and Gustav, who looked at one another in astonishment.

Knowing that it was not wise to make enemies in this town, Judson tried to regain his earlier demeanor. "Again I am sorry if I frightened you, ladies and gentlemen," he said sounding apologetic, "or if I seemed rude. But my present physical condition has severely hampered my social skills. That's why my life demands so much ... secrecy. Forgive me, please. Now if you'll kindly excuse me, I'll be off."

Judson grabbed both shopping bags of supplies, one in each arm, and strode out of the establishment, letting the door, with its characteristic ringing bell, close behind him, leaving the group of awe-struck Crovackians gazing after him through the window.

"Soldiers nothing!" Gustav blurted out, watching the last of the bandage-faced man quickly rush down the street. He stood up, his vision still on the man who seemed to be attempting to evade notice by anyone else. In less than a minute, Judson disappeared amongst the sharply angled buildings of the town. "That's our grave robber, I'll stake my reputation!"

"Sure was a weird one," Johann said, "I'll say that. And I didn't believe that story about being in an accident, not for one minute. And the way he avoided my questions! Wouldn't tell us where he came from or anything. You ask me, he's a wanted criminal of some sort, probably some doctor who turned bad, and that's why he's hiding his face like that."

"A doctor who need bodies for some hellish work," said another man.

"And he doesn't want to be recognized," continued Johann.

"You got to be right," the woman in black said solemnly. "That's got to be our corpse thief. But I wonder what he does with the bodies?"

"I still say he's a ghoul," someone said, "and he eats them! And that gold probably came from the fillings in their teeth!"

"Enough of your ghoul talk!" Johann demanded.

"Maybe we should go to the General for help," said the proprietor. "Get some of his soldiers and—"

"No!" said Gustav. "If by some chance that man is connected with the army, and the General knew that we were on to them, we'd be issuing our own death warrants."

"We've got to handle this situation ourselves," said Johann. "Come on, Gustav.

You're a good one for walking. Let's you and me follow our bandaged stranger and see what he's up to."

Johann grabbed Gustav's arm, guiding him out of the chair. Only Gustav noticed the sly smile now spreading across the other man's face.

"Yes," said Gustav, "I'm going with you."

"What about the rest of us?"

"No," said Johann with command, "there's too many of us. We'll have a better chance at following him undetected if there are just the two of us. All of you wait here. We'll come back and report anything unusual that we find. And I got a feeling we're going to find plenty that's unusual."

Like human jungle cats, Johann and Gustav stalked out of the store and into the street, continuing in the direction that Judson was seen to have gone. To their delight they had not lost the man; their quarry, seen small in the distance, could be discerned turning one of angular corners of the street. And the farther they pursued their quarry, the less their thoughts focused upon the theft of bodies.

Nudging Gustav, Johann said, "No sense in sharing all that gold with so many people, now is there?"

"My sentiments exactly," answered the bearded man.

Johann and Gustav continued their pursuit undetected, surreptitiously tracking Judson as he hastened out of the town, through the woods and finally to the giant rocks that lined parts of the beach. Their hunt finally culminated, their presence still a secret, at a cave about three hundred yards from the lake.

"Remember when we used to play there as children," whispered Gustav as the two men approached with caution the cave's yawning mouth.

"Not so loud," Johann warned as quietly as he could. "Now we are here as businessmen."

Hearts pounding in anticipation of a reward of gold, the two townspeople stepped inside the cave. Johann grinned, believing that he was about to accomplish two important tasks this day — ridding his town of this stealer of corpses, and, at the same time, lining his pockets with gold coins.

The cave was damp and forboding, as it had always been, and the cool air blowing from the lake whistled through the barren chamber and through the men's clothing. But the chills they were now experiencing were not merely from the wind. Something was wrong here, something they sensed more than they knew. Still, they pressed onward.

Several more silent steps brought them to a larger room of the cave where a fire was

burning. Seated with his back to the room, positioned as if trying to keep his distance from the loudly crackling flames, was the figure of a giant man clad entirely in black. Seen from the front, sitting on the ground but much closer to the fire, near the two bags of supplies, was a hideously scared man wearing familiar khaki clothes, a long length of bandages lying in a pile at his feet. That man had to be Judson, but the other?

Obviously noticing them, Judson looked up, the mass of burn tissue that was his face looking even more hideous in the firelight.

And as the burned man lifted his face, the other figure started to turn and, in the same moment, arose to its truly gigantic height.

"Who... what's... that?" whispered Johann, his words choking in his throat, his thoughts no longer on either grave robbing or gold.

The two intruders looked at one another, then looked sharply back in the direction from which they had come. If they moved faster than they had ever moved before, they might make it back to town — alive. But they could not move, at least not now, too frozen in horror were they as this manlike thing arose to his true height and took a few steps toward Judson, all the while avoiding that fire. Now they could see more of the giant — his stitched features and arms, the metallic plugs at the temples that reflected the radiance of the fire, the yellowish skin that reminded them of the skin of a man long in the grave.

But this was clearly not one of the corpses from their town's own graveyard, now somehow walking again in the world of the living.

The creature moaned and then smiled as Judson, his enormous hands moving toward the grocery bags, that eerie sound was enough to inspire Johann and Gustav to press their bodies against the stone wall and noiselessly remove themselves from this cave of horrors.

Within less than a minute they were outside again, racing across the sand and into the woods on their way back toward town, both of them most eager to relate an even greater story than either could ever have anticipated.

Except for the women, the people they had left behind were still seated at their table, sipping beer while they anxiously awaited hearing Johann and Gustav's report.

The sun was already setting behind the century-old buildings of the town's main street when the two men finally began to calm down enough to speak rationally.

"Saw who?" said a man at the table. "The bodies?"

"We... saw them!" Gustav said.

"Saw who?" the proprietor said, stepping away from the bar, a glass of dark beer in each hand, to rejoin the group once more. He handed one glass to Johann, the other to Gustav. "Here," he said, "if your report is good, these are on the house."

The two men gratefully accepted the glasses and began to gulp down their contents. Then they returned to the chairs that had been vacant since their departure to pursue the man with the bandaged face and the khaki fatigues. They did not speak again until the beer had completely settled their nerves, their breathing returning to normal.

"They were... ohhhhh..." moaned Gustav.

"Saw who?" the proprietor finally inquired. "First off," answered Johann, wiping his mouth dry and setting aside an empty glass, "we saw that weird one with the bandages, that James Judson." Johann's eyes were wild and his face became a pale mask as he continued, "Only his bandages were off and his face!"

"Aye!" interjected Gustav, his eyes shifting, his face now as pale as his friend's. "He wasn't lying about that accident."

"We tracked him to the old 'pirate's cave' out on the beach," Johann went on, "you all know the one."

"We found him there, all right," said Gustav, "but that's not all we found. No sir, we found something far worse in that cave than Mr. Judson's ugly face. Something that convinced us that these... these creatures are the ones responsible for desecrating the graves of our dead."

"What about the missing corpses?" asked someone at the table. "Where they in the cave?"

Gustav shook his head.

"What we found..." Johann began, pausing to hand his empty glass to the proprietor for a refill, "what we discovered was... how should I describe it? ... some sort of monster!" Emphasizing the word, he watched as every man at the table reacted with incredulity.

A "monster?" exclaimed the proprietor from behind the bar as he reluctantly refilled

Johann's glass. He cocked an eyebrow. "And just what kind of a monster was it that you saw? A ghoul, perhaps?"

"Even two ghouls couldn't have eaten six corpses so fast!" stated one of the men.

"No," said Johann, shaking his head and wrinkling his forehead into a new map of deep lines. "This monster was real, not something out of mythology. And horrible it was, even uglier than that Judson character. Must have been ten feet tall."

"I twelve!" interrupted Gustav.

"A giant! With pale yellow skin that looked like it belonged to a corpse. And covered all over it was with scars and stitches, like the creature had been... put together," said Johann, touching his face and wrists to indicate the location of the things he was describing. He touched the sides of his head. "And little metal things sticking out of his head, one on each side."

"Aye," Gustav agreed. Rising, he held out both arms and took a few steps away from the table, walking stiffly. "And he moved just like this."

The other people in the room watched Gustav's impersonation, not knowing how to respond.

"Wasn't human, I tell you," Johann said as Gustav again took his place at the table. "But something created by Satan himself! I tell you those two fiends are the ones who robbed our cemetery last night."

"The tall one," said one of the men, belching loudly as he set down his empty beer glass. "He's got to be the ghoul, all right."

"I still don't believe in that ghoul nonsense," replied Johann sternly, "but I do know that something must be done about those two. Look out there. The sun is almost down. It'll soon be dark. And if we don't drive those horrors out of town now, or, better yet, kill them so they'll never come back, they'll be back. They'll be back in our cemetery tonight with their shovels and we'll be missing some more of our dead, this time maybe even our own friends and relatives."

By now the sun was barely more than a yellow glow seen from behind the rooftops of the buildings outside the store window. In less than an hour night, with all of its potential dangers, would be upon them.

"I say we go back to that cave now and do something about those two," said Gustav, rising bravely from his chair. "Are you all with Johann and me?"

The group began to mumble amongst themselves until the proprietor broke in, "But if that big one is such a 'monster, like you say, then what can we do? Most of our weapons have been confiscated by the

CHAPTER VI: PURSUIT BY TORCHLIGHT

"We saw them! We saw them!" Johann shouted, his voice crackling, as he and his friend Gustav, both breathing heavily, rushed back inside the general store, the door with its announcing bell clanging behind them.

soldiers."

"Our strength will be in our numbers," explained Gustav. "We will fight these fiends as our ancestors once fought. We'll use the 'weapons' of our trades—clubs, hoes, rocks if need be."

"But Gustav," the proprietor asked, "will even that be enough to combat those two? Without guns..."

Johann stood up, tall and commanding. Leaning forward, he rested his hands on the table, a smile curling his lips.

"There is more," he stated flatly. "Something that both Gustav and I noticed in the cave. Something that could provide us with the one weapon that will prove to be the giant's undoing. There was a fire burning in the cave. The tall creature seemed to be enjoying its warmth. But he also made a point to avoid it. It seemed to me that he was actually afraid of that fire."

"And we know that Judson is not too fond of fire," added Gustav.

"I'd wager one of Judson's gold pieces that fire is the giant's weakness," said Johann.

The proprietor slapped his hands together, getting everyone's attention. "That's the answer!" he shouted. "Fire will be our weapon!"

"We'll make torches, then!" added Gustav. "Are we in this all together?"

Immediately all the other men in the store let out a unanimous chorus of affirmation.

"I have materials in the storeroom that will make excellent torches," said the proprietor. "I also have other things we can use as weapons." With a wave of his hand, he ushered the miniature mob to the far wall and led them into the storeroom. There he gave them their pick from his inventory of tools and any other items they might wield against the two mysterious strangers.

The sky was already black as Johann, Gustav and the rest of their irate group quietly exited the store from the back door. The storekeeper after locking up his establishment for the night, joined their team.

Carrying wooden clubs, hammers, hatchets and other tools, in addition to long sticks tipped with tied-on rags and soaked in kerosene, the six men hurried nonchalantly through an alley and down the back streets, careful to keep within the shadows cast by the moon and the streetlamps, and cautious to be avoided being spotted by the General's soldiers. Surprisingly, however, few soldiers were observed this night, and many of their usual posts were not unattended.

Before long, still unnoticed, the little mob was making its way through the moonlit



forest and toward the lake.

Finally emerging from the woods, Johann pointed toward a faint glow appearing from an opening in the rocks across the beach.

"There," he whispered. "Their fire is still going so they are probably still inside the cave. Now follow me, men."

Pretending to be courageous, the five other Crovakian avengers followed the lead of Johann as, moving silently, he rushed toward the cave mouth. By now, except for Johann and Gustav who had actually seen the faces of the two strangers, each of the men imagined his own frightening image of what they were about to encounter.

Reaching the cave entrance, Johann nodded and gave the signal. Matches were struck and, moments later, a half dozen torches blazed in the night. Then the group walked inside the cave, their firebrands casting weird

shadows against the craggy walls.

"Now, men!" Johann bellowed at last, his voice echoing several times in the tunnel-like chamber. "This way!"

Yelling, shouting, swinging their makeshift weapons and holding high their torches, the throng rushed down the damp, odorous corridor of stone until coming upon their quarry. The two figures were seated on rocks, both of them drinking coffee being brewed in a pot set over the fire. Judson's face was still unmasked, its long-healed scar tissue a terrible sight in the radiance of the flames. The other figure, turning now to see the six men charging to him, was even more ghastly in its appearance. The attackers stopped abruptly, bumping into one another, as Judson began shouting curses at the intruders and the enormous yellow-faced figure stood tall, his hideous head nearly

touching the cave ceiling.

"You see!" Gustav's voice resounded through the chamber. "We told you! It's a monster all right!"

"I know what that is!" exclaimed the store proprietor and bartender. "I read about it in an out of town newspaper. That's the Frankenstein Monster!"

"The Frankenstein Monster?" came a barrage of overlapping voices.

"Kill it!" exclaimed Johann. "And the other one, too!"

The yellow eyes of Frankenstein's creation focused not on the six intruders but on their torches. He stared at the flames, that weapon spawned from elementary Nature, and which, in the past, had inflicted so much pain on his once-dead flesh. He recalled the unbearable agony as the fire ate away at his revived tissues.

Fire!

One of the few things in this world that could destroy the Monster for all time, back again to consume his scientifically joined organs that had served him for more than two centuries!

Instinctively the beast covered his face with his arms, at the same time giving out one chilling roar of both anger and terror.

Judson removed a revolver from under his arm fatigues. "You damned fools!" he shouted at the intruders. "Take another step and you are all deadmen!"

But all six of the men were either brave or foolish enough to charge. The Monster, after all, was powerless as long as they maintained their torches. Technically, then, the odds were really six against one, despite the fact that Judson possessed a firearm.

"So, you couldn't have just accepted my money and let it go at that," said Judson. "You had to let your curiosity bring you to your death."

They rushed at Judson *en masse*, their attack so quick and furious that only one of them, the proprietor, fell to the burned man's bullets. There was simply too many of them and their torches were to close for Judson to fire his gun a second time.

Growling, the Frankenstein Monster was still keeping his distance from the intruders' torches. Yet, seeing his only friend in such imminent danger, he moved fast. Seizing a huge rock from the cave floor, the brute hurled it into the attacking group of men, quashing one member against the cave floor, his torch falling to one side.

"Forget Judson for now!" shouted Johann. "Get the Monster!"

Seconds passing, the remaining five men switched their attention to the beast.

"Come on," said Judson to his monstrous friend, "we're getting out of here!" The captain rushed to the Monster's side, his handgun aimed at the five approaching men. "I still have five bullets," he threatened, "one for each of you. And I am an excellent shot."

The men halted, their vision riveted on the barrel of Judson's revolver.

They fled deeper into the darkness of the cave. Judson suspected that the dark tunnel might lead them to safety, if only they could lose these intruders and escape their fire. True to his prediction, cool air began to swirl about their faces, and soon the moon could be seen shining through a back entrance to the cave.

The Monster looked over his massive shoulder as he awkwardly ran, his long legs making gigantic strides over the pebbly floor of the cave. He could see that the five men were now in pursuit and still brandishing their weapons.

Again they were running across sand and stone. But Judson and the Monster were outside, at least. If they could reach the Tylösaur before those townspeople – and those torches – caught up with them ...

Having gained somewhat of a lead on the Monster, Judson stopped, turned and fired his gun's second bullet through Gustav's forehead. Gustav dropped in his tracks, his death momentarily delaying the remaining four men.

"That way!" roared Judson, getting the Monster's attention and pointing to the slope of a hill formed of jagged rock. "If we split up, they'll have less of a chance of catching either of us." Saying that, Judson ran toward a grouping of large rocks, vanishing into their shadows.

The delay afforded the Monster the time he needed to start climbing the rock.

Justine and the remaining men paused, not knowing which of their foes to pursue, allowing the giant to get a dominant position above their heads.

"We mustn't let the Monster get away!" yelled Johann, unconcerned over the Monster's power or Judson's last four bullets. All that mattered to him now was revenge. "They can't get away with killing our friends! Come one! Let's bum them to death!"

Whooping like savages, the four men turned away from Judson and assembled at the base of the enormous rock. Above them the Monster loomed, having reached the summit and no other place to go. They raised high their torches, close enough to the giant so that he could feel the threatening heat of their flames. Then, seizing a loose rock the size of a boulder, the brute lifted it high, then

tossed it with all his inhuman strength, crushing another of his tormentors to pulp.

Johann and the remaining vigilantes looked at one another in horror. Within minutes three of their group, all friends, had been brutally slain. Which, each one wondered, would be the next to die under the rage of these two human monsters? With reluctance they started to step backwards.

At the same time, Judson emerged again from the umbrage that concealed him, his pistol trained on the last four men. He raised the weapon and was about to fire, when Johann, his face a twisted mask of hopelessness, dropped his torch and pleaded, raising his hands imploringly.

"No more," he begged, pitifully. "We've had enough. See? We are dropping our weapons."

Johann motioned to what was left of his vengeful band and they immediately complied, letting their weapons – including the torches – drop to the sand. Like their unofficial leader, they raised their hands and began walking backwards.

"Pi-please ... " said one of the other men, his single word fading into the sound of the wind rushing inland from across the lake.

"I'm sorry," Judson said, "I didn't want it to come to this."

"You're going to kill us?" stated Johann, slowly pacing back toward the rear entrance of the cave.

"Your knowledge of our existence leaves me no choice."

Johann and his friends turned sharply and scampered back toward the cave.

Again Judson fired, but his targets had already vanished into the darkness. For a moment or two he wondered if he had inadvertently missed them because he did not want to assume another death on his conscience. Rather than pursue them, the captain looked up toward his giant friend, still standing like some grotesque monument atop the rock.

"They won't be back here for a long while," he said to the brute, turning to see the Monster clumsily make his way back down to the beach.

The Monster snarled, his pearly teeth clenched together as he stared off in the direction his attackers had fled. Again mortal men had sought to torment him and steal away his life. Now they were gone; yet if they did return, the beast thought, they would pay with their worthless lives.

The torches, by now, were no longer blazing brightly, their flickering fires already dying in the sand. Defiantly the Monster extinguished the last of the flames beneath his

crushing boots. Then he looked toward his human friend.

"Yes, I know, my friend," said the captain. "We're being hounded again." He looked off towards the lake and the rocks behind which his submarine remained hidden from view. "Perhaps we should return to the ship and try another land where we might live peacefully. But then you, nor I, will ever learn what that mysterious force was that brought us here. And so, I leave it to you. Do we cast off or stay?"

The Monster paused in silence for what seemed to be a long time but was actually less than half a minute. Then, his raven hair tossing in the breeze, he pointed toward the sand and grunted.

"Then stay we will," said Judson, "at least until we get to the bottom of this mystery."

The Monster gazed toward the cave and snarled again.

"I know, I suppose I should not have let those men get away," he said, the tone of his voice sincere, "but I think I've killed enough in my time. I suppose this will mean that we'll be hunted again, at least as long as we stay in Crovackia. So, then - let's be off in some new direction, and cover our tracks as we go. Then, after we've settled down for a bit and we're certain no one is hunting for us again, we'll resume trying to track down those emanations." As he finished talking, Judson removed a long length of gauze from a pocket of his fatigues and began to swathe it about his head.

Nodding in agreement, the Frankenstein Monster turned and lumbered off across the beach, away from the cave and leaving behind the collection of corpses he and his friend had produced. Captain Judson caught up, and then walked along side him, the two of them striding across the moonlit sands. For at least an hour, Judson did not speak.

It was near midnight when the Monster and Judson stepped into the grassy clearing. In the light of the moon they could see that their long trek had brought them within walking distance of a pleasant appearing farmhouse. A dim light flickered from inside the house, probably from a fireplace. That meant warmth for the rest of this rather chilly night. Having been forced to abandon their supplies in the cave, the two travelers might find food or drink here. And both the giant and Judson were still quite hungry.

Nodding at each other, the Monster of Frankenstein and the weary Captain James Judson strode across the dewy grass toward the farmhouse.

With caution they walked up to the door,

making their way as quietly as the creaking timbers of the front porch permitted them. Oddly, it seemed that, except for the radiance of the fireplace, there was no other light anywhere to be seen. As they reached the top step, Judson slowly opened the warping wooden door and peered inside the house.

Both Judson and his giant companion welcomed the warmth and light from the fireplace. But, as the captain had already surmised, there was no other source of light in the house. The room seemed comfortable enough, but the meager furnishing indicated that the owner of this place lived only within his means, which were not great.

As the two outcasts entered the living room of the farmhouse, it was clear that the place was occupied. In one corner of the room, to the side of the fireplace, she was sitting in a rocking chair. Even through the dim light the young woman's loveliness radiated. Her skin was somewhat pale in the moonbeams entering the window, contrasting beautifully with the long raven hair that flowed along the contours of her shoulders. Her face, with its closed eyes, was like that of some angels Judson had seen depicted in classical art and her figure, which could be discerned through the peasant garb she wore, was of equal elegance.

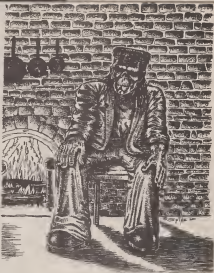
The woman was not moving and, for a moment or two, both Judson and the Monster wondered if she were even alive.

Then, she began to rock rhythmically in the chair. Her eyes opened slightly, but only slightly, and she spoke.

"Come in," she said in a voice that sounded like a melody, "you are welcome to share my fire."

Judson and the Monster looked at one another in a way that both knew the other's thoughts. Who was this gorgeous young woman sitting alone in this dark room? A woman who was not terrified by their monstrous appearances?

"Don't be afraid," she continued affably. "And once you've warmed yourself, if you're hungry, there is plenty of food here. I cooked



it all myself."

They moved up closer to her, the Monster's heavy boots thumping against the hard wooden floor. Still she did not react to their appearance. And there was a friendly smile upon her comely face.

"What are your names?" she asked. "It sounds as if there are two of you."

"There are," answered James Judson, "can't you -?"

Her smile broadened. "My name is Katherine," she said. "Katherine Warren. I'm sorry, but you'll have to tell me who you are. You see, I've been blind since birth."

CHAPTER VII:

KATHERINE

Captain Judson and the Monster felt both sorry for this sightless beauty and also relief. For this was one instance in which a human being would not flee from them in terror or attempt to harm or destroy them solely because of their physical appearances.

Complying with Katherine's request, the two guests walked across the room toward the fireplace. Several logs were burning, shooting out crackling pieces of blazing wood. The Monster, as always, maintained a safe distance from the threatening flames, but at the same time enjoyed the fire's warmth.

The young woman's naturally colored lips formed a friendly smile.

"The fire feels good, doesn't it?" she said. The tone of her voice left the two visitors know that she bore no ill feelings toward them. In fact she sounded as if she really might like these two beings that she could not see.

"It feels wonderful," Judson said. For the first time since setting foot onto the Croyakian beach – indeed, since teaming up with the Frankenstein Monster – that he felt totally at ease and relaxed. "I thank you for the hospitality."

Katherine was listening intently. She reacted as the Monster, sitting in a chair next to the fireplace, slid a heavy booted foot a few inches forward. She did not, of course, know of the subtle smile now appearing on the giant's face.

"We both thank you," the submarine captain said.

Judson noticed the look of concern that suddenly appeared on Katherine's face.

"Is there something wrong?" she asked. "Is your friend unable to speak? If that's the case, I understand."

After a few moments of silence Judson answered, "Yes. He ... used to be able to speak quite well. That was a long time ago. But ..." He stopped, debating whether or not to give their comely hostess anymore details. Certainly he was not about to reveal the true history of his non-speaking friend and, thereby, ruin the idyllic situation he and the Monster were now enjoying. "He has been ill," the captain finally said.

"Oh," she said, "I'm so sorry to hear that. But who are you two? Are you soldiers?"

Captain Judson smiled beneath his bandages.

"No," he said, "we're simply a couple of tired travelers who have come from a long way off. We know nothing of any soldiers and, frankly, we've both had our fill of organizations where uniforms are required."

"Hmmm ...," was Katherine's only reply.

"But tell me, Katherine," Judson continued, "are you always so friendly to strangers? I mean, let's be honest. You don't know us. We could be some terrible fiends for all you know."

Katherine turned toward the fireplace, extending a hand to feel its warmth. "I try to be kind to everyone," she said. "Even if you were one of the soldiers, it would be more wise to be nice rather than rude." Then she proceeded to relate to her guests the recent history of her town being overridden by invading soldiers bent on taking over the entire state of Croyakia.

"Since my brother Wilhelm was taken away by the soldiers," she said, "it has been difficult for me. Although I do my best, it's not easy to run a farm when you can't see." Despite the horrors he had experienced in his life, some of them with his own involvement, Judson felt pangs of pity inside him for the Croyakian people.

Now, however, his main thoughts were neither on Croyakia's current plight nor the life he had lived before arriving in this state. His attention was grasped by that lovely vision rhythmically rocking to and fro in her wooden chair, this person who was gradually overwhelming him with her physical beauty and attentive ways.

With an alluring smile on her face, she asked, "Who are you? What shall I call you?"

Captain Judson paused in thought. Knowing her sentiments toward the current military situation in her land, he felt it best not to let her know his title. Revealing himself to be a captain might, in fact, ally him in her estimation with those invaders. Also, he determined to concoct, as fast as possible, a plausible story by which to protect himself and the Monster as well.

"My name is James," he finally said from behind the wrappings covering his mouth. "James Judson."

"James," she said, mulling the name over in her mind, then smiling. I like that name."

"Thank you."

"And your friend?" she asked.

The Monster reacted, his yellow eyes shifting in their deep sockets.

"I know this will sound strange," Judson replied, "but I don't really know." He kept silent for a few seconds more, fishing to find words that would hopefully be believed. "I met him some time ago. He was mute from the start. Apparently he was the unfortunate victim of an accident of some kind that cost him his voice. Apparently the accident also caused him to suffer amnesia. I don't know many more details than that. I doubt he does, either."

The young woman's lips pouted. "I'm sorry, Jim," she said. "But we all have our own afflictions, don't we?"

"How true, how true," replied Judson, placing the fingers of his left hand against his bandaged cheek.

Captain Judson was puzzled. Something odd was happening to him, not to his body but to his spirit. He felt warm inside and it was not because of the fire burning just inches away. The man had almost forgotten what it was like to be called "Jim," especially by a woman this lovely. He waited a few more moments before replying, preferring simply to

take in her beauty and experience her friendliness.

Her brow wrinkled and she cocked her head. "Your voice ..." she began. "There is something unusual about it, as if something is covering your mouth. I don't mean to be a busy body, but ..."

Judson interrupted her as politely as was possible. "You were indeed right before when you said that we are all afflicted."

He stopped speaking as he saw the woman gracefully extend her arm in his direction, her fingers moving about.

The Frankenstein Monster's gaze followed the movement of her hand, the brute curious as to what she was about to do.

"Please," she said to him, "come over to me. I would like to read your face. By touching you I can know what you look like and maybe also something more of your inner person."

"No!" Judson said with a start. "I don't think ..."

But Captain Judson suddenly felt paralyzed. Though he wanted to get up and run from this place of warmth and friendship before Katherine discovered the truth about him, he could not move from where he sat. He could not resist that calming and assuring voice or those delicate fingers now reaching out to him. Indeed, he was now moving closer to the young woman, closer, until at last her gentle touch rested against the coarse cloth that was his disguise.

Katherine looked perplexed.

"I don't understand," she said, her fingers stroking the gauze. "Were you also in an accident?"

"Yes ..."

"Were you hurt?" she asked. "Were you ... in pain?"

Quietly Judson slipped off the chair and onto the floor, moving his body gingerly closer to Katherine. He was feeling more comfortable in her presence with every passing moment. The man saw that the Monster was following his movements, looking at him with intense curiosity, and angling his great body forward on his chair.

Smiling, Katherine reached out again and resumed stroking Judson's the rough material covering face and head.

"Yes, Katherine," he said, his words almost choking in his throat, "I too was in an accident. It happened many years ago. A fire, a bad one. And, well ... my face isn't anything to look at anymore. In fact, most people who see it without these wrappings are terrified ... or repulsed by it."

Again she smiled, very warmly and with seeming understanding. "I'm sorry," she said

with emotion. "I can only imagine how much you suffered. But your pain, at least the physical pain, probably went away long ago. However, I can sense an inner beauty in you, Jim. And to me that's what is really important."

Judson felt his nerves tingle. No one had ever spoken to him like this, and these words were being said by one of the most beautiful women he had ever known. As she gently rested a soft hand upon his shoulder, he knew that something incredible was happening to him. He knew that he was, after so many years spent in an arena of death and horror, he was changing.

Turning his head only slightly, the captain could see that the Monster was utterly confused by what was transpiring in dim light of this friendly farmhouse. The giant arose from his seat, towering over both of the humans, and a deep-throated moan issued from behind his partially opened mouth.

"And you?" said Katherine melodiously, reacting to the Monster's sound. "Please, come over here and join us. Next to me."

The Monster hesitated and looked to the captain for advice.

"I'm afraid my friend suffers from a similar affliction as do I," he admonished the young woman. "He too is greatly disfigured. And, unlike me, he's not so vain that he masks his face from the world."

"No matter," she said to Judson, and then continued to direct her words to the unseen Monster. "Now please. I know you can't speak. But please, join us. In this house we are all friends."

The Frankenstein creature was now more confused than ever, perhaps in his entire existence of more than two centuries. The brute wanted to feel the woman's soft fingers against his hands and face. But he knew that, once she experienced his once-dead flesh and felt the lengths of his scars, she would become like all those "others." She would scream and curse and abandon him. And yet, like Captain Judson, this artificially created man could somehow not resist Katherine's allure.

In a single movement, the Monster dropped to his knees, the impact producing a loud thud on the wooden floor.

Without the slightest reluctance, let alone fear, Katherine let her fingers float toward the Monster's face. With extreme tenderness she touched that flesh she could not see, felt its coldness, the rough texture, the network of deep lines. The creature sighed with relieve, made a sound that suggested he was on the verge of weeping, as she continued to caress the tissues that barely seemed to cover the

organs and bone underneath. She ran her fingers over every part of that oversized head – the stitched and clamped gashes, the burn scars, the high brow, through the long locks of hair and around the metal electrodes. A look of amazement gradually appeared on her face; yet never once, during this entire examination, did she exhibit any sign of being horrified or repulsed.

The giant moaned again, this time contentedly.

"In you, also," Katherine said, bringing her hand away from the Monster's face, "I can sense true goodness." Again she trained her attention on Judson. "Jim," she said, "if you and your friend need a place to stay for a while, I think I'll enjoy your company."

"I..." was all that Judson could say in response.

And Frankenstein's Monster – this being that was capable of battling anyone who had ever walked this Earth, who possessed the strength of so many men and who had claimed the lives of more victims than he could recall – cried.

More than a week passed with the glorious sun rising and dipping behind the mountains that bordered the state of Crovackia.

These were wondrous days indeed for Captain James Judson and the Frankenstein Monster, with Katherine's two guests performing the tasks required for keeping up a farm and with the young woman providing the meals and lodging. Occasionally the General and a few of his soldiers, wearing uniforms that the captain recognized, rode up to the property, questioning her about her escaped brother, whose whereabouts, following his escape from jail, were still not known. During such instances Judson and the Monster remained hidden down in the farmhouse's cellar.

When the soldiers were not around, the Monster's mighty arms performed most of the farm work. The creature learned how to plow the Warren fields, performing work that would ordinarily require the prowess of several men. Of course, James Judson, or "Jim" as he was now thinking of himself, also did his share of the chores. Gradually Katherine's farm was regaining its former appearance and productivity.

Katherine was naturally delighted by the recently acquired knowledge that her brother was no longer in prison, but she still did not know where he was or even if he still lived. "When," Katherine began one bright afternoon, "or I should better say if Wilhelm ever returns, he'll surely be surprised to see this place. Katherine tried to sound cheerful,

but she was clearly worrying over her brother's unknown fate. "I only pray that he's out there hiding someplace. And that he's safe."

Judson clasped her hand and did not let go. "From what you've already told me about Wilhelm," he said, "he seems to be a very brave and resourceful man. If he got out of jail, he's most likely with friends, hiding somewhere, waiting until it's safe to come back."

"You're probably right," she replied. "He knows that the first place the soldiers would come looking for him is here."

In the nights that followed, after each day's work had been finished, Katherine's interest in her two strange houseguests grew, especially the very large one who grunted instead of spoke, and who had those peculiar metal plugs sticking out the sides of his head. Never did she want to out step her bounds and ask too many questions. But she recalled that Jim had already told her that his giant companion could, at one time, speak. In her mind now was the resolution that she would help this man who had already given her so much of himself. Indeed, she determined, if he had spoken before, he could surely be made to speak again.

One night, Katherine sat with the Monster before the fireplace and stroked his giant hand.

"I know you understand what I say," she said. "There's no denying that. And you obviously understand what Jim says to you."

The Monster nodded, smiling, forgetting that she could not see him.

"Are you certain that you cannot speak?"

Again the creature raised and lowered his head. Then, remembering that Katherine was blind, he opened his mouth, no more than a pathetic moan issuing from it.

Captain Judson, who had been watching this oddly matched twosome from the other side of the living room, remarked, "I know that my nameless friend would like to speak. But whenever he tries it causes him much discomfort in his throat. It's possible that his vocal cords have been damaged. I can't say for certain. But I believe that he still has the ability to talk and the intelligence. He hasn't spoken in so long that, if his power of speech could be restored, it would require much time and patience. But maybe, with your help..."

"I understand," said Katherine. She reached forward and touched the Monster's throat, feeling a vibration as he again uttered a low moan.

"Would you like to speak again?" she addressed the Monster.

The creature made a sound that definitely meant affirmation.

"Then speak you will," Katherine said, making her words sound like a promise. "We'll do it ... together."

Then she proceeded to convince her giant guest, via her own soft voice and encouraging words, that he would again speak if he worked with her and did not give up. For many hours the two of the labored that first night, and for many days and nights after that. And with every effort came a growing mutual understanding and trust that was crucial in the Monster's period of learning. Nevertheless, despite the efforts of both the giant and his pretty teacher, nothing more sophisticated than grunts and moans ever came out of the giant's mouth. Still, even while the Monster began to get discouraged, the caring Katherine would not let either of them abandon this dream.

On the fourth night of the tutoring, much to everyone's astonishment, the Monster, clutching his stitched neck and with obvious considerable effort opened his mouth and spoke a single recognizable word ...

"K-kath-er-ine ..." the giant said, slowly and deliberately, his eerie-sounding voice straining and cracking. "Kath-erine," he repeated, this time apparently with slightly less effort.

The Monster felt a sudden ache in his throat, though the hurting hardly mattered to him. All that concerned him now was that he had, after over two hundred years, actually spoken an intelligible word. His transplanted eyes shifted, looking first to Katherine, then to Judson and finally back to the young woman whose name he had just so successfully pronounced. "Katherine," he said once more, the pain still present but not as severe as the first time he had spoken.

Captain Judson rushed toward the Katherine and her triumphant pupil.

"Good God, Katherine!" he exclaimed. "You've accomplished a miracle!"

"He accomplished it," she said with a smile. "I only helped him to make it happen. But deep inside I knew that he'd be able to talk again."

"Katherine ..." the Monster repeated her name again, smiling like a giddy grammar school student. His gruff voice was becoming like music to himself. "Th-than-nnnk you, Katherine."

"Unbelievable," stated Judson, grasping his towering friend's right hand and giving it a strong shake. "In all the time I've known you, that was the first thing you ever said that I could understand. I can see that, once you get used to talking, we'll have a lot of things to

talk about. You can't even imagine how happy this makes me!"

"Ja-as-ames ... James Ju-judson," the Monster said, his voice sounding like it originated in some ancient tomb. Then he pulled back his black lips, which formed the most grotesque grin of friendship that the captain had ever seen. "My ... fr-friend ..."

Captain Judson turned to Katherine and gave her a firm hug, to which she responded in kind. He enjoyed the feel of her perfect body pressing against him and noticed that his heartbeat was increasing. She moved closer to him, her cheek rubbing against the coarse wrappings hiding his face. There were feelings enflaming inside of him, feelings he had long suppressed and which he had never thought to experience again in his tortured existence.

"Katherine," he finally said, tactfully pulling himself away from her, "how can we ever repay you for what you did here?"

"Your friendship is all the thanks I want or need, Jim," she answered, again moving closer to him and putting her arms around him. "As I said, I really did nothing. Our friend always had the ability to speak. It was there, only locked inside of him. I just helped him to find it. It was he who finally brought it out."

"Whatever ... if you did it or he did it, we're both thankful," said the Captain.

The Frankenstein Monster turned away from the couple, who were still in each other's arms. Stiffly he walked out of the room, a tear streaking his scarred right cheek. As he departed the living room, the giant kept repeating one word ... the name of the woman who had helped him find at least this one shard of a lost humanity.

CHAPTER VIII:

THE MATTER OF LIFE AND

DEATH

The alchemist's workshop in Rogaro's musty castle had, for more than two weeks, undergone a remarkable transformation. In the days and nights following the arrival of the General and his soldiers, and then the return to life of Victor Frankenstein, the old room had been converted from a medieval relic into a testimony of both Eighteenth Century and modern science. During that time the military leader had filled the once-dead scientist's orders most thoroughly, so that this room that had formerly served the occult needs of a sorcerer now housed an impressive array of electrical devices and gadgets.

Machinery and chemistry apparatus seemed to fill every nook and corner of the room, with electrical wiring and cables stretching and snaking around oddly shaped metallic towers. Liquids of many colors, no longer the potions of a wizard but now consisting of carefully blended chemicals, broiled and smoked to produce the ingredients that would contribute to the artificial creation of life. Huge terminals and complicated control panels now dominated various walls and spaces. In all the place resembled the playroom of some mad genius child.

Frequently Victor Frankenstein tested his equipment so that the chamber vibrated and crackled with wild electrical life. Rogaro, Morley his servant, the General and the other spectators experienced thrills of suspense as they watched the scientist perform these tests, their bodies responding to the static electricity that filled the air, almost making their hair dance about their heads.

Frankenstein beamed amid all this electrical splendor, his spirit obviously invigorated by the thrill of his unique experimentation; but always, even as he seemed to reach a state of ecstasy as he worked the switches and dials and observed the spectacle around him, he returned to his usual state of depression.

This night, the hour already late, Frankenstein turned off the controls as the General approached him and patted him on the back. The officer was puffing on a Cuban cigar, blasting out clouds of smoke with every word that he spoke.

"Well, Comrade Frankenstein," stated the General. Rapidly he turned his head so that the cigar smoke drifted through the air in several directions. "I kept my word, didn't I? Such apparatus! Just what the scientist ordered. And most of this equipment is what we call 'state of the art' ... far superior to anything even dreamed of in your own time."

The scientist smiled coyly and nodded. "My, my," added the General, "how things must have changed over a couple centuries."

"This apparatus will be more than sufficient for what I must do here," Frankenstein replied, sullenly. "And I shall be able to do this work much faster, far more efficiently, than when I created that Fiend. But please - again I beg of you to release me from this ... this spiritual imprisonment. Please do not force me to go through with this ... this horror. I have known the consequences of such experimentation. The creation of human life by another human being can result in nothing more than misery and death. It will happen again. And with six

new beings..."

"It's 'misery and death' that we hope will be the end result of this project. Misery and death inflicted upon our enemies." Crunching his teeth into his cigar, the General looked the scientist squarely in the eyes, then went on, "Listen. I have no more time or patience for your holier-than-thou whining. Those six creatures have a long way to go before they're completed and we've wasted too much time already."

The General turned away from Victor Frankenstein and walked in the direction of the old man wearing the Zodiac-decorated robes, his voice trailing. "Now get to work, Frankenstein, or I promise you that you'll never be free of us."

Victor Frankenstein walked across the laboratory to behold the current state of his ghoulish handiwork, which, if successful, would unleash six new monstrosities upon the world and also, hopefully at least, return his spirit to everlasting peace.

In the center of the room were six very large wooden tables constructed, by Morley with the aid of a few soldiers, of rough wood supplied by the forest. These structures were rigged to a pulley and chain apparatus that allowed the tables to be raised to a transept in the roof of the castle. Each table was long and sturdy enough to support a giant manlike form at least nine feet in height.

A silent humanoid form, none of them complete, lay atop each table.

Victor Frankenstein gazed with revulsion at the half dozen lifeless products of his own genius and surgical skills. At first glance they appeared to be simply six naked corpses. Closer examination, however, revealed that these were more than mere dead bodies. Few parts of their gross anatomy matched. Horribly coarse stitches showed where large hands had been transplanted onto muscular limbs. Legs of varying sizes, similar to one another mostly in their powerfully defined musculature, had been similarly attached to the hip regions of the bodies. Stitched wounds, not yet healed into scar tissue, formed mosaics of unsightliness that crossed and criss-crossed the massive chests, the huge shoulders and flattened stomachs.

In one-way each of these patchwork things were identical. None of the humanoids possessed a head—at least not yet.

Tubes pumping various kinds of nourishment into the bodies had been painstakingly inserted within the gaping cavities of the necks. These fluids would keep the bodies fed with nutrients until the heads could be joined.

The heads'

It made Victor Frankenstein, despite his past experiences working with the grim raw materials of creation, almost ill even to think of them.

Walking to the other side of the room, Frankenstein studied the six objects stuffed into their transparent tanks of preservative fluid. The frozen expression on each severed head stared out at the scientist through the glass. The General's men had certainly not selected any of these specimens based on their cosmetic appeal. For a while the scientist considered trying to make his escape from this place of horror, but knew there was no escape from the General or the wizard who kept him trapped in this world of living men. He had to take his insane project through to its inevitable end if, ever again, he was to know rest.

He moved away from the heads, passing a larger glass tank containing a selection of floating human eyeballs that seemed to watch him as he walked by, and stopped before another set of six transparent containers. Inside each of the latter was a human brain resting in a bubbling fluid, each one of these organs soon to find a new home in an alien human skull.

Frankenstein spent several minutes studying the brains, noting down on a pad his observations and comments on each of them. As he had ever been, the man was still the scientist. And even in his plight he had to marvel at the miracle of science he would soon be performing—infusing these virgin organs with new existences, each one of them entering the world anew, with no memories of any previous life.

When his scrutiny focused upon the sixth brain, Frankenstein turned around sharply and called out across the room, "General! Come here at once!" The tone of his voice hardly betrayed the fact that he was, indeed, not the one in control of his situation.

Immediately the heavyset man in uniform stomped across the room and halted before the scientist. Still smoking his cigar, he left a trail of smoke drifting off behind him.

"Yes, Comrade Frankenstein," the General said, "what is it now?"

"This last brain," said Frankenstein, pointing a pale finger at the pink-gry blob floating in the sixth container. "Where did your men get it?"

"Oh, I don't remember such details," the General replied, scratching his head. "I would imagine it came from the medical school in the next town, just like all of the other brains they stole. Why? What is the problem?"

Frankenstein leaned toward the container to get a better look at the brain inside, then

waved for the General to join him.

"You see that?" Frankenstein asked, still pointing at the brain and indicating where some of the convolutions appeared to be somewhat flattened and lacking in detail. "And do you see those marks?"

"I suppose so," said the General, leaning forward and puffing out smoke. "What of it?"

"Don't you realize what all that means?"

The General shook his head. "How should I? I'm a military man, not a scientist."

Frankenstein turned away from the sixth brain and stared into the General's eyes. "That brain has been damaged, General," he said with authority. "Possibly by one of your own men, perhaps by some careless medical student. It looks to me as though it may have been dropped."

"So?" the General asked, still unconcerned.

Frankenstein grimaced as he replied. "General, if you want me to do this work for you, I must have full cooperation. That brain has been damaged beyond repair. If you wish to have six creatures result from this first experiment, then I must have a new brain. And a good one!"

The General dashed what was left of his cigar to the floor and crushed it beneath the heel of his boot.

"What you are demanding now is impossible," he said, frowning. "It cannot be done."

"Why not?" asked the scientist. "Your men were able to obtain these brains? What is the problem in getting one more?"

"Because, Comrade Frankenstein," the General bellowed, his eyes wide, his demeanor bordering on rage, "we cannot risk visiting the same place for raw materials more than once. Once a cemetery or mortuary or any other place is robbed of bodies, once a high-profile establishment like a medical school is broken into, people will be on their guard to prevent another such robbery. The last thing we want to do is let the people in this state know that we are the ones responsible for these thefts. Let them blame the ghouls, as some of the people in the town already do."

"Then where can we get another brain?" Frankenstein asked.

"I don't know," answered the General. "As far as I know, that medical school is the only place in this region where human brains are kept—brains fresh enough for our purposes. I'm afraid getting another brain at this time is not possible. You'll have to use the one you already have and make the best of it."

"Then the sixth brain will have to be disposed of, which means there will only be five of your filthy soldiers coming to life in

this laboratory."

Speechless, the General turned to look at the six headless patchwork men.

"Choose!" Frankenstein told him as if he were the one giving the orders.

For a few seconds the General gaped at the six stretched-out horrors, unable to make a decision. Each one of these lifeless things was the result of excessive time and work, not to mention the considerable funds supplied by his superiors. To report to them now that one of their potential super-soldiers had to be destroyed so near its completion, possibly because of a blunder of one of his own men, was unthinkable.

Without saying another word to Frankenstein, the General hurried off toward Rogaro, who had been standing at the other end of the room watching the proceedings. Frankenstein attempted to hear them or at least read their lips, but succeeded at neither from this distance. He could only observe as, whispering to one another, the wizard and the General turned their backs to the scientist.

When they ceased speaking and turned back into view, both men had sinister grins on their faces.

Rogaro raised a bony hand and snapped his fingers, the sound immediately summoning Morley, who had been standing as a silent and weaponless guard in a corner of the room. As the servant stepped up before him, the wizard whispered something into his ear. Moments later, Morley was slipping out of the laboratory and toward the front door.

Returning to his work of examining the six composite corpses, Frankenstein heard from an open window the whinnies of horses followed by the rickety turning of wagon wheels.

For the next hour, the scientist continued performing his numerous tasks, always, of course, under the watchful gaze of those who made certain that he was doing what he was told to do. Truthfully the scientist was becoming so thoroughly absorbed in his work that he rarely looked away, in that hour, until he again heard the sounds of a horse-drawn wagon approaching the castle.

A suspenseful minute passed, with Frankenstein suspecting and fearing the worst.

When an anxious Morley rushed back into the laboratory there was a sadistic look of delight on his pockmarked countenance and a gruesome object in his calloused hands. It was dripping with gore and its eyes were frozen open in a look of utter terror. The servant held it up for his master's inspection.

Rogaro cocked an eyebrow. "You did well," was all that the wizard said.



"My God!" exclaimed Frankenstein, turning away from the disembodied head. "It's one thing to rob graves ... to plunder medical schools ... but I never meant for anyone to be murdered!" He covered his face with his hands and turned his back to the evidence of what Morley had just done.

The General rushed up to Frankenstein's side.

"Now, now, Comrade Frankenstein," the officer said, trying to console the overwrought scientist. "Who's to say where Morley got that little gem. Maybe it's for the best that we let him keep that little secret. And if he got, well, a bit overly .. enthusiastic, then what's done is done."

"I will not be a party to murder!" Frankenstein told him, furious. "My work brings life back to the dead! It does not

deprive it from the living! If you want me to cooperate with you, then there can be no killings. Even my own eternal rest is not a high enough reward for that kind of work."

The General ran his tongue across his highly polished teeth. Then he feigned a look of anger at Morley, as if to tell him not to do again whatever he had done to obtain that head.

"All right then, Comrade Frankenstein," he said, "it shall be the way you want it. But we have this head now and there's no reason not to use its brain, if it's a good one, which it probably is. One thing we know is that it's fresh and will, therefore, most likely serve your purposes. All I can do now is assure you that there will be no murders. And there isn't any need for any. I believe that, with this latest specimen, you have everything that you

need to complete the project."

"Yes," Frankenstein said without enthusiasm, his body still turned away from the trophy Morley had brought back and still held in his bloodstained hands. "It is now only a matter of operating on the brains, to make them docile, then transplanting the brains into those six heads."

"Good!" the General said, a wide grin on his fat face. "Then we will complete the experiment, bringing those six new warriors to life." He turned toward Rogaro's servant. "Morley, come here with ... that."

The dumb servant walked up to the General, the head held at about the level of his chest.

"Don't give it to me!" the officer insisted. "Comrade Frankenstein" will show you where to put it."

Slowly Frankenstein turned, his mind already deliberating again, calculating, planning what he had to do next. Then, an unpleasant look on his face, his nostrils twitching almost imperceptibly, he accepted the blood-soaked thing in his own hands.

CHAPTER IX:

PEACE

S torm clouds were beginning to form over the Warren farm. They were tossing slowly, mildly, but their dark and blanketing texture indicated that the countryside would soon be drenched in a torrent of rain.

The Frankenstein Monster, who had been working at his regular chore of plowing the Warren fields, paused to watch the clouds gently swirling overhead. Then he resumed his work. When he finished, he stomped over to the tool shed near the barn to fetch the axe he would need to chop wood for the evening's fire.

The giant continued the work he was so gladly doing for the wonderful young woman who lived on this farm. Katherine had indeed helped him to restore some of his lost humanity.

At the moment, Katherine was sitting with Captain Judson at the edge of the river that ran near the Warren farm. Judson's face was still wrapped in bandages, which he wore even though the woman could not see him. He knew, however, that those delicate fingers of hers, if they touched his scarred visage, could transmit to her brain images of his ugliness as vivid as seen through the best of human eyes.

Judson placed his arms around Katherine's waist and drew her supple body close to him, as both people watched the gentle movement

of the water. A cool spray of moisture caressed them, although the coarse bandages prevented Judson from feeling it on his face. Katherine smiled warmly as the spray and the afternoon breeze brushed against her cheek.

"The air feels cool, Jim," Katherine said almost musically. "Is it cloudy?"

His arm resting around her back, he answered, "Yes. It looks like we may be in for some rain." Judson's eyes looked up to see that the clouds were already starting to block out the light. "I predict it'll be a big one, too."

She smuggled closer to him and he felt a thrill.

"I don't care," Katherine told him, rubbing her smooth cheek against his bandaged face. "As long as we're together."

Judson's emotions were in a state of turmoil. There was no doubt in his heart that he was quickly falling in love with the lovely, sightless human being now nestling so close to him. Yet, even though he held her and she was obviously fond of him, he fought his best internally to suppress such feelings. He knew that sooner or later, if he allowed his emotions to freely show, there would come that dreaded moment when Katherine asked to experience in her own way his ghastly countenance. And how could he deny the woman he loved what seemed like so trivial a request?

Worse still, what would she say or do if ever she learned of his past and of the life of violence and terror that he once led?

Suddenly Judson was overwhelmed by severe sensations of self-loathing. At the same time his own longings for Katherine were steadily overpowering the feelings he had for himself. He despised his hands, which had taken their share of human lives; but now those same hands were displaying to this raven-haired woman some of the affection he truly had for her.

Without thinking Judson moved away from her so that her long locks brushed against his gauze-wrapped cheek.

Katherine obviously knew that something troubled the man.

"Jim," she said with perception, moving closer to him again. "What is it? Tell me what's the matter."

Judson remained silent, his mind fishing for appropriate words.

"Tell me," she went on, "what's been bothering you for so long. Jim, whatever it is, I don't care. I'll understand."

"Katherine," he finally said, gradually working up his self-confidence, "there's just so much you don't know about me. And that if you find out certain things, well, I'll lose

you."

"How do you mean?"

"I've lived a long and mostly 'unusual' life, my dear," he continued, "and some of the things I've done I'm ashamed of."

"Everyone can be forgiven, Jim."

Judson shook his head. "Maybe," he said, "but not for every sin they've committed." He hugged her tightly and stared off toward the clouds. "Katherine, my darling Katherine, sooner or later your brother will come back. And when he does, he'll see both myself and also my rather unorthodox friend. When he sees the way we look, I know how he'll react. He'll treat us like all the others. He'll try to drive us away, or worse."

"No, no, Jim," she said with assurance, "Wilhelm isn't that kind of person. He's tolerant of everyone, except, of course, those soldiers. He is like me. I guess it's in our family blood. It is what's inside you, Jim, that Wilhelm will respond to ... and which is what makes me love you."

She finally said the word that he had not yet found the strength to speak. *Love*. Now Judson's inner turmoil was raging almost beyond control.

"You are a good man, Jim," she said, "and that is all I care about or Wilhelm will care about."

Hearing those words, something seemed to snap within Judson's soul and he began to laugh uncontrollably.

"What is it, Jim?" Katherine asked, unable to fathom what she had said that might be interpreted as humorous. "Did I say something wrong ... or stupid?"

"No, no," he said, his laughter subsiding as he positioned her so that he could gaze into her sightless eyes. "It was nothing like that at all. And it was nothing important. I just have these little emotional fits at times." His laughter finally settling down, he said, "Just a little irony, that's all. If you knew ... No, maybe it's best we let the past remain the past and move on to the future."

"Our future, Jim?" she asked, smiling invitingly. "Do we have one together?"

Jim said nothing in response, and for almost a minute the man and woman remained silently facing one another, then looking toward the sky. Birds were singing nearby and in the distance an animal - possibly a deer, Judson thought - wandered by.

It was then, in one of the most peaceful moments that Judson had every enjoyed, that Katherine asked the one question that he had dreaded since that moment of first learning of Katherine's affliction. She asked the question in her softest voice, in the tone he had never

been able to resist, although now it had the effect of a soul-ripping explosion.

"Jim," she said, "I want you to take off your bandages. I want to read your face." She raised her hands and moved them in the direction of Judson's hidden countenance.

Judson's body made a decisive jerk away from the woman, leaving her fingers reaching for only the afternoon breeze.

"Jim —?" She began to cry.

The man's fingers moved toward her and brushed away some of her tears. He regarded each droplet as a treasure, which he did not then wipe away.

"I didn't mean to hurt you, my dear," he said, embracing her again. "But I don't think it would be good for you to ..." He had started to say "see me," then continued, "to touch my face. Then you will know how I really look. And believe me, Katherine, it will be as terrible to touch as it is to see."

Unaffected by Judson's warning, Katherine smiled in her usual caring way. It was the smile that always captured Judson's spirit. Already she was reaching out to him again, her fingers resting on the rough windings of cloth that preserved Judson's greatest secret, feeling for their end. Finding it, Katherine slowly began to unravel the bandages, letting them fall against the riverbank in a continuous trail of gauze.

"I wish ... you wouldn't," Judson said, his mouth finally free of the distorting wrappings. His body grew tense. "I wish you would leave them on."

Nevertheless, Judson did not resist her.

"Don't worry about a thing, my darling," Katherine whispered to him through the quiet sound of the wind. And she continued to remove the bandages.

Finally Judson was relaxing, letting her complete the one act he knew was inevitable. There could be only two outcomes: Either Katherine would accept him or reject him, both of which he was braced to handle. He moved his body away from her as the last of the wrappings dropped to the ground in their long continuous trail. Smiling again, she began to reach out to touch his face with her right hand.

Feeling more naked than he ever had before, Judson tried to avoid being touched. But Katherine's left hand seized his shoulder, holding him where he sat while her other hand touched what remained of his face.

Now, Judson thought, she would know the truth!

And in another moment Katherine would be screaming.

But Katherine did not scream, nor did she even grimace as she ran the tips of her fingers

over the exposed burned tissues that had healed over time into this mass of scars that constituted Judson's face. For a few moments there was a look of surprise on her face, followed by one of sadness and then of understanding.

"Well," asked the captain, "now what do you think?" Saying that, he quickly arose and turned his back to the young beauty. He began to laugh, almost insanely. "Can you still love me, Katherine? Can you love a monster?"

Responding to the sound of his voice, Katherine made her way toward him and, standing behind him, took both of his hands in hers. "I told you it would make no difference what you look like, Jim," she said to Judson's astonishment. "You are you, isn't that enough?"

It was still impossible for Judson to accept what was taking place as real. No, this had to be another lie. Few people had ever treated him like a human being before, at least since the fire stole his face, and no one had ever expressed love for him. Soon, he was convinced, this time of bliss would come to a bitter end. There was nothing more to do now but enjoy this moment while it lasted.

The storm clouds were becoming darker and thicker. The rain might descend upon them at any moment.

Looking at his wristwatch, Judson noted the time. Night would soon be upon them, probably bring with it the rain. He and the woman he loved had been sitting by the river longer than either of them had planned. Judson retrieved his train of bandages and wrapped them again around his face.

"Come on," he told her, pressing a hand to the small of her waist to lead her towards the farmhouse. "It'll be dark soon. And we don't want to get caught in the rain at night. Let's go back inside."

When Judson and Katherine arrived in the house, the Frankenstein Monster was sitting next to the warm fireplace, proudly exhibiting the pile of wood he had so recently chopped. The axe rested on the floor beside the wood.

Outside, the sun was rapidly disappearing behind the hills.

"We ... will be warm," the Monster said, with considerable effort but less discomfort than before. "I chopped ... much wood. Please forgive me ... Katherine. It is still ... hard to ... talk. Throat still ... hurts."

Katherine smiled and nodded approvingly.

Captain Judson still found it rather strange to hear the giant speak.

"Thank you," Katherine told the Monster, clapping his yellow hand and giving it a firm

shake, the contrast in the sizes of their hands striking.

Judson smiled under his mask. What he was now witnessing — a woman who was not afraid of the Monster, and the Monster behaving somewhat like a well-behaved child — was no longer a rare sight to behold. The two fugitives had indeed found new lives within the confines of this farm, and Judson sometimes wondered if both of them, through the intercession of Katherine, had found redemption for their past crimes. Thus far there had been no intrusions or interruptions. The soldiers had not visited the place in more than a week. Judson wondered if he and his towering friend had finally slipped into a life free of horror and death.

Even as they began to spend the evening enjoying the heat of the fire, with the beautiful Katherine always in their presence, Judson could not escape the feeling that this idyllic situation was rapidly reaching its end. The first sounds of thunder roared from outside, instilling the captain with a distinct sense of foreboding.

More unnerving than the thunder was the sound of many footsteps hurrying toward the house from outside, then up the farmhouse porch steps.

There was no time to escape into the cellar. Captain Judson instinctively pulled his service pistol from under his clothes.

The Frankenstein Monster at the same time reached out for the heavy, still-sharpened axe.

"What's wrong?" asked Katherine, her voice breaking up. Her heart began to race as she recognized a voice from outside the house.

The door swung open. "Katherine, I'm —"

Judson and the Monster stared in silence at the five townspeople now crowding through the front door and into the living room. Two of them they had encountered before ... on the beach. One of them, seemingly their leader, was bearded. All of them wore hats, the kinds farmers wear in the fields, with well-worn brims. Each one of the men carried a rifle. And they were gazing in both horror and wonder at the ready figures of Judson and the Monster.

"Withelm," Katherine said with uncertainty, "I'd like you to meet ..."

Her brother cut off her words: "My lord, what are they?"

"They're the two I told you about that robbed those graves!" shouting as loud as he could. "The ones that killed our friends back at the beach! Killed Gustav! The bandaged one's got a face to scare of Satan himself! And the big one is the Frankenstein Monster!"

"Supposed to have been put together from corpses," said another man.

The black-haired young woman shrieked, "No! No, it's a lie!" Katherine was desperately trying to regain her composure. "They couldn't have..."

There was a flash of movement that Katherine could only hear. Wilhelm darted across the room and grabbed his sister, pulling her aside as Judson's trigger finger tightened on the metal of his revolver and the Monster threateningly raised his axe.

"You!" the Monster snarled. "Let Katherine ... go! Put her ... back!"

Captain Judson's mind raced with confusion as to what next to do. He would like to have reasoned with the brother of the woman he so dearly loved, but that was now patently impossible. He could see that there was a rage burning in the young man's eyes, one born in the fear that his sister's life was threatened by the presence of these two monstrous visitors. He understood Wilhelm's feelings and did not hate him for them, in part because of his own feelings for the woman.

And although Judson's pistol was aimed at Wilhelm's heart, he could not squeeze that trigger!

Again Katherine screamed.

"Get them, men!" shouted Johann, aiming his rifle and blasting a round of ammunition clean through the corpse-like flesh of the Monster's right arm.

The pain quick but sharp, the Monster roared with rage. In just one moment he had seemingly lost any vestiges of humanity that the woman had helped rekindle within himself. Now he was no more than a savage juggernaut of destruction bent only on killing these men who were here to torment him and his friend.

He raised his axe. And, as two villagers rushed him aiming their rifles at his head, he almost cleaved them into halves with two titanic swings of the woodchopper's axe. Their gaping corpses, with internal organs hanging out and gushers of crimson liquid spewing out from where the axe did its work, plopped against the floor.

Johann covered his mouth, obviously becoming ill, as the eruptions of blood struck his face and arm.

For once Judson was honestly thankful that Katherine could not see. "Wilhelm," he said to the bearded man, "get Katherine out of here!"

Wilhelm reacted with a start, then began moving his sister toward the door.

"No, no --!" Katherine screamed, protesting, trying futilely to break the iron grip of her brother's arms.



"Fire!" shrieked Johann, as Wilhelm led his sister to safety outside. "I've been told that Monster is afraid of fire!"

There was no longer any reason for Judson to hold back. Katherine was away from this scene of horror and out of danger. As the other remaining townsmen rushed for the fireplace, evading the Monster's swinging axe reaching out to grab one of the burning sticks of wood, the captain fired his gun, bringing the man to the floor, his brains staining the wall behind him.

Johann, the last of the group still alive, took advantage of the distraction of the other man's death and withdrew a flaming piece of wood out of the fireplace. He hurled it at the Monster, who quickly moved aside, the ersatz

torch setting ablaze a dry cushioned chair.

"We have to get out of here before that spreads!" shouted Judson to the Monster.

"Not ... yet!" roared the Monster, lunging forward to seize Johann, no longer possessing the most potent weapon in his arsenal, by the throat. "You like ... fire?" That stated, the creature dashed the man into the flames of the fireplace, shattering a log into a hundred burning pieces.

Johann's screams resounded through the farmhouse as the flames consuming the chair began to spread.

For a moment, Judson recalled the painful fiery incident that cost him his own face years ago. Then he looked toward the Monster. Both nodded at one another, the heat around

them dramatically increasing.

"Now!" roared the Monster.

The Monster and the captain were now the only two living beings within the burning farmhouse. They looked about the place, the flames growing and spreading, some of them already eating through the flesh of the four corpses that litter the living room.

Judson considered their options, evaluating which escape was most advantageous. The back door! he thought, motioning for the Monster to follow as he started off toward the rear part of the house. But upon nearing their destination, they found a barrier of growing flames preventing an escape by that route.

Reversing their direction, trying their best to avoid the burning timber that fell from all directions, they discovered that the front entrance had also become a veritable wall of fire.

A hideous wail of terror issued from the Monster's mouth, his power to say anything more seemingly gone. His hand relaxed and the axe, still dripping with blood, clanked against the floor. There was no doubting that he and Judson were trapped within this inferno!

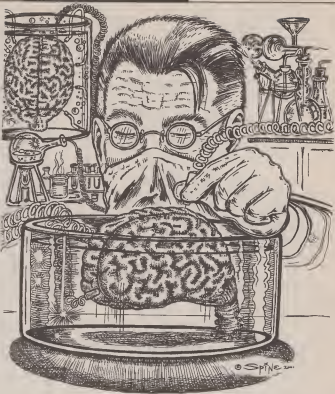
The flames spread at a seemingly impossible rate. All of the walls were on fire, being consumed by the one enemy in this world that the Monster feared the most. The stench of burning flesh permeated the place as the flames cooked more and more of the corpses' flesh, then moved across the floor nearer and nearer to the giant's boots.

Finally the Monster spoke again, but only one word, again and again, "Fire... fire... fire!"

"I'm afraid there's no way out of here, my friend," Judson said in desperation, choking as the smoke invaded his lungs, attacked his exposed eyes and making them burn. The bandages covering his face gave him only meager protection against the flames and the now-suffocating smoke.

It was ironic, he thought, that this fire—the very element that had disfigured him long ago—should now steal what the other fire had spared him. And just at this moment, when he experienced his first real love. The Fates must indeed be laughing this night, he thought, knowing that his end was inevitable.

The Frankenstein Monster roared, then screamed as the walls of the farmhouse finally began to cave in and the fire rushed



upon him. Through the conflagration and the loud crackling flames, a single imploring word, shouted to the heavens in a guttural voice, could be heard ...

"Friend!"

CHAPTER X:

SIX BRAINS FOR SIX SKULLS

Victor Frankenstein leaned over the human brain that he had removed from its tank of nutrient-enhanced liquid preservatives. This was the first of the six brains, every one of them well preserved and undamaged. With painstaking precision he worked, his sterilized scalpel cutting skillfully through the grayish tissue of the prefrontal

lobe. The scientist sweated considerably as he continued this operation, removing that part of the brain so that the organ's recipient would function like an obedient robot.

The General and Rogaro stood behind Frankenstein, observing what the scientist was doing looking over his shoulder.

"How are you progressing, Comrade Frankenstein," inquired the General, crushing out his cigar on the workshop floor. His eyes remained focused upon what the reanimated man was doing.

Cutting out the rest of that portion of the brain which, if left intact, might result in another rebellious "Demon," Frankenstein did not look back at the General as he answered, "I'm doing as well as I can." His words were

spoken precisely and sharply. "I might do even better if I could work alone and interrupted, without your spying eyes following my every move."

The military man and the sorcerer smiled at each other.

"I see that you are performing the lobotomy," replied the General, as Frankenstein kept on working on the first brain. The heavyset man turned to address the man in the Zodiac robes. "You see that, Comrade Rogaro?"

The wizard cocked an eyebrow in reply. "By removing that section from each brain, we eliminate the threat imposed by Comrade Frankenstein's original creation. Remember that the so-called Frankenstein Monster had developed an extremely complex mind and strong will. A will strong enough to eventually rebel against his creator and destroy everybody Frankenstein loved."

The General's words affected the scientist as these vivid, painful memories entering his consciousness with all the cutting power of the scalpel in his hands.

"But this operation," responded Rogaro, "will see that history does not repeat itself in that regard."

"But," the General went on, "there will be no chance that our battalions of marching deadmen will ever turn against their masters. By removing their prefrontal lobes, our new breed of soldiers will barely have wills of their own. It will be a simple matter for a strong leader, such as myself, to control them. We'll send them into the worst battles, terrifying and destroying all in their path. And if they manage to get themselves blown apart, we'll just get Comrade Frankenstein here to put them back together again!"

"Rather like a reversal on the nursery rhyme of Humpty Dumpty?" said Rogaro, his withered lips smirking.

"How true!" exclaimed the General. "That's more than the King's horses and all the King's men could accomplish!"

Victor Frankenstein was not amused by the General's attempt at levity. But the military leader and the sorcerer immediately proceeded to break out into heavy laughter. The General's men then followed suit, laughing along with their leader, although not all of them understood the joke.

After the laughter, real and forced, finally died away, Frankenstein continued his work on the first brain. Examining it closely, making certain that not a single convolution was damaged or wanting in any way, he replaced it in its preserving tank.

Pacing up close to the scientist, the General said, "When you are finished working on

those brains, what's left to do. Only the transplantation and then the actual process of bringing these creatures to life? I mean, I've been watching you closely. The hearts, the other vital organs, the limbs, everything seems to be in place."

Victor Frankenstein glared at the General.

"You are indeed observant, General," the scientist said as he turned a dial that made the liquid in the first brain container bubble. "All that remains – after I finish cutting the last of these prefrontal lobes – is the insertion of these brains into those six skulls." He pointed to the six monstrosities stretched out on the six wooden tables. "Then they will be finished. Finally will come the actual life-giving process itself, the technique known only to me or possibly to anyone having access to my original diary."

The General stepped forward to get a better look at the six creations.

Each of the patchwork figures seemed to rival the others in sheer ugliness. Almost every one of the creatures spanned almost the entire length of its respective table. The creatures were clothed now, clad in apparel secured from the town by the General's men. And although none of these beings was yet alive, each one was securely bound to its table by thick leather restraining straps. Their heads had, by now, been joined to their bodies, although their braincases were empty, and their skullscape lay on their tables waiting to be attached.

"You've done quite well so far, Comrade Frankenstein," the General told the scientist, looking into the open skulls. "Let's just hope, for all of our sakes, that these six horrors 'take' to your secret chemical injections and to the electricity."

"They shall!" Frankenstein posited with total confidence in his unorthodox techniques. "Bringing these ... these blasphemies to life is now the least of my worries."

"And how much longer will it be?" the General wanted an answer. "When will the transplantations be completed? And then when will the actual life-giving stage of this experiment begin?"

Victor walked briskly to a window and gazed out toward the sky. "The transplantations will be done when they are done," he said. "Keep watching me work and maybe you'll get a better sense of how long it will take to install all six brains. Perhaps this phase will be completed by morning. But the actual charging of these bodies with electricity is dependent on Nature."

"Nature?"

"Yes," Frankenstein said, his attention shifting to the closed trancon above them.

"My technique involves combing the power in these machines to that of the storm ... the raw, natural electricity that we call lightning. The lightning rods your men attached to the roof of this castle will attract that power and bring it down to us from the heavens. When the storm reaches its zenith, we'll raise those bodies to the trancon. There they will bathe in Nature's own power. That, coupled with the power in our machines and that of the injections, should resuscitate the heart, the lungs, stimulate the brain and limbs, in effect, bring those creatures to life."

From outside came the sound of distant thunder.

"It looks like we'll have a nice storm before long," commented the General, walking over to the window to look outside. Holding out his hand, he felt a few droplets of water touch his hand. "It's already begun to rain."

"Yes," Frankenstein agreed, turning back to the brain containers and carefully removing the second pinkish-gray object. "And if we are to meet that storm at its peak, I will have to work more efficiently on these brains."

While Victor Frankenstein repeated his lobotomy techniques on the five remaining brains, the General and Rogaro mostly occupied their time by conversing with one another.

The wizard stroked his devilish beard. "Do you plan to free 'Comrade' Frankenstein's spirit someday?" the ancient one whispered, his narrow, evil-looking face grimacing.

"Who can say?" the General replied with an equally nefarious leer. "This work can conceivably go on indefinitely. Once I confirm the success of this project, I will take Comrade Frankenstein back to my own country. There my superiors will no doubt put him to work making more such beings, but on a mass-production schedule. Imagine! A veritable assembly line of walking and fighting deadmen! Hah! We'll turn out more soldiers by this procedure than we can ever use."

"I see that we both think very much alive," Rogaro said, "when it comes to creating living monsters. It's a pity that I shall probably outlive you – a violent death notwithstanding – and see this project at its fullest completion."

The General was too concerned with what Frankenstein was doing to pay much, if any, attention to the wizard's comment. "I will personally see to it that you are made a high official in the puppet government we will soon be setting up in Crovaskia, Comrade

Rogaro. Maybe then you will finally be able to lend it over – legally, too – the people native to this region, some of whom have long been your enemies.”

“Those are the kinds of words I like to hear, Comrade General,” the skeletal man replied, showing his full array of yellowed teeth. “The very same people who have, on so many occasions, tried to destroy me, will soon be bowing to me in homage and respect. And to think,” he went on, smiling broadly, “I once thought of you as ‘The Enemy.’”

Again, these two men from different countries laughed uproariously, each one contemplating his improved future plans.

Outside, the rainfall was gradually increasing, its droplets slapping hard against the castle walls.

The General’s gaze shifted around towards the working figure of Victor Frankenstein.

“I only wish our science-minded friend could speed things up a bit,” the chubby senior officer said, a look of worry appearing on his round face. “He’ll need the powers of that storm to complete his experiment. And from the looks of outside, we’re in for a big one within the hour, possibly less.”

Rogaro stuck his head out of the window. The cool, evening breeze blew about the hairs of his mustache and beard and chilled his skin.

“No need to worry about that, my friend,” he told the General. “I’ve lived on this hilltop for more years than you can imagine. And I’ve seen countless of these storms – just like one we’re about to experience. Believe me when I say that this one will be with us for at least several days.”

Leaning out the window, the General breathed deeply of the cool night air. Turning, he took another Cuban cigar from one of his pockets and struck a match. “Just the same,” he said, lighting the cigar and puffing smoke that drifted out through the window, “I wish he’d speed things up.”

CHAPTER XI:

CURSE OF THE MONSTER

Even through the flames, the Frankenstein Monster and James Judson could hear the fading voice of Katherine Warren, pleading for her brother to release her so that she could help her two new friends. The two of them turned in the direction of that voice, hoping to find some place where the conflagration was not quite so severe. The fire, however, was increasing in intensity all around them.

The Monster could feel the searing pain as more wounds were burned into his already

disfigured flesh. His brain almost ceased to function as the most horrible death he could imagine – death by fire – seemed more imminent with each passing second. Now his muscles were acting on sheer reflex, their only goal being to break through the fire before it consumed the giant’s body.

One section of living room wall, though burning, had still not been completely enveloped by flames. Patches of unscathed wallpaper could be seen through the smoke. If the Monster moved quickly enough ...

Captain Judson watched incredulously as the Monster, braving the flames, retrieved the axe, still dripping with the blood of two men, and began to chop away at that same piece of wall. Again and again this combination of tool and weapon ripped through the solid materials. For almost a minute the wall withstood the Monster’s relentless onslaught until, at last, it finally collapsed outward. At last the night sky could be seen between the splinters as the already burning structure began to topple.

“My God!” Judson shouted with relief and the first sense of hope since the flames began spreading around him. A great section of wall tumbled to the ground outside. “You’ve done it, my friend! We’re free!”

Wasting no time, Judson lunged toward the path to salvation created by the Monster. Then, together, the captain and the giant darted, avoiding burning pieces of timber, outside.

Already the rain was beginning to drop as the two fugitives hurried across the wet grass.

The two disfigured beings breathed with relief, stumbling to the ground with the smells of smoke and wet grass strong in their nostrils. They turned, looking at the farmhouse that begun as a kind of heaven for both of them but was now a blazing Hell. For more than a minute they stood, watching, grieving for Katherine’s loss of her home, but also silently rejoicing in their own freedom.

Freedom, however, was not to last.

From some distance away, neither the Monster nor Judson could estimate how far, Katherine screamed, “Wilhelm!”

The Frankenstein Monster turned in the direction from which the voice had come. He did not see the beautiful sightless woman, but rather a new vision of terror that was now rushing toward him.

It was Wilhelm, Katherine’s brother. His face was a symbol of hatred and in one hand was that most hated of weapons ...

A blazing torch!

Some three hundred feet behind the young man was Katherine, staggering about an open piece of field, and calling out to him,

“Wilhelm! Please, don’t ... you don’t understand!”

Without any hesitation Wilhelm shoved the firebrand toward the Monster’s face.

HIDEOUS screams and curses issued from the Monster’s mouth as the beast tried in vain to fend off the torch, waving his giant hands pathetically in an attempt to shield his face.

But Wilhelm’s attack was too savage, too determined. In his mind was the thought of his sister being in danger and he imagined all manners of atrocities that these two hideous creatures might have inflicted upon her. And he recalled the brutal slaughter by the Monster of two of his friends. There was no stopping Wilhelm now. He would pursue this fiend until the flesh was burned away and the bones were charred. Until this towering horror was no more than a heap of ashes!

Judson, of course, held in his hand the power to end his friend’s torment with a single well-placed bullet. But he could not bring himself to kill the one person who meant the most to the woman he loved, even at the cost of his friend’s life. Tormented between his loyalties, he could only watch and react as Wilhelm continued his attack.

Finally, again reacting by the power of his reflexes, the Monster raised a leg, managing to kick Wilhelm back a few feet and to the ground. The time required for the young man to regain his stance was just enough for the brute, moving stiffly but at incredible speed, to escape into the dark shadows of the farm. By the time Wilhelm was prepared to go after him, the giant had already rushed toward the woods.

For several seconds Wilhelm and Judson stood staring into each other’s faces. Wilhelm’s gaze then went to the gun in Judson’s hand. “What’s more important to you,” Judson asked him, “our destruction or your sister’s safety?”

When Judson finally lowered the weapon, the younger man, a perplexed look on his face, ran back in Katherine’s direction.

As the Monster neared the edge of the forest, Judson, catching up to him, grasped his arm, bringing him to a halt. But then it became like attempting to hold back a locomotive, as the beast started walking again, dragging Judson along with him.

“Wait!” Captain Judson shouted imploringly. “Stop! We just can’t leave like this!”

They were already in the woods, walking up an incline, when the Monster finally stopped again, his face a mask of hatred.

“You ...” the Monster snarled, turning his head with a snap, his voice deep and angry,

"could have ... stopped him. You could have ... stopped this," he showed Judson the burns on his hand and cheek that were put there by Wilhelm's torch, "from happening!"

The Monster's body jerked as he started to move forward again. Once more Judson pulled back on the muscular arm.

"You could have ... killed him!"

"No, I couldn't!" Judson tried desperately to make the beast understand. "That man is Katherine's brother. Our Katherine. I couldn't kill him."

"You could," the Monster affirmed, the muscles in his mighty arm tensing like steel bands.

"But think what it would mean had I done that," Judson continued. "Think of Katherine. Of all that she has done for us. For you! You wouldn't want her to suffer anyone than she already has in this life, would you?"

The Monster paused in thought.

"Because if I'd killed her brother, she'd be all alone in her world of darkness."

Then the Monster shook his head, his long wet hair flopping about in the rain.

A flash of bright light followed by a loud thunderclap tore through the dark heavens. What had started as an average rain was evolving into a storm.

"No ..." the Monster said at last. "We must not ... hurt Katherine. Not anymore." He waited, taking another look back towards what remained of the Warren farmhouse. The last of the building's materials were still blazing, but the flames were gradually dwindling to hissing steam as the rain continued to come down. "Men have tried ... to hurt ... me," he continued. "Tried to ... kill me. For the last time. All other men ... are my enemies. All other men ... must be destroyed. We will ... go back to underwater boat. Leave this place ... find other men. Then ... I will kill them!"

The words still escaping from his mouth, the Frankenstein Monster continued trekking among the trees and other kinds of vegetation, moving deeper into the forest. Judson walked alongside the brute but, knowing that it was useless even to try, made no further attempts to restrain him physically.

"Wait!" Judson said. "Listen to me. We can't just leave now."

"Why ... can't we leave?" the Monster growled, not slowing down. "I must kill KILL!"

"Because of Katherine!" Judson finally blurted out over a loud clap of thunder, his smaller body still keeping up with the giant. He looked toward the Monster as he continued to speak, his face now battling the increasing rain. "I must go back and see

Katherine. At least one more time. You see, I ... I love her."

Again the Monster stopped, his face a ghastly sight as the rain drenched his stringy hair. From the expression there was no mistaking his intentions in this matter.

"No!" the Monster said loudly. "I ... like Katherine. She helped ... me. But now, with her brother ... she only makes for us more ... trouble!"

But Captain Judson continued to plead his case and to beg for his giant friend to go back and help him to do ... "something."

"Then ... then you stay here!" the Monster roared. "Go back to Katherine. I go ... back to boat. And wait. Soon ... you will see ... and come back, too."

Captain Judson made one last attempt to hold back the giant. With a low moan, the Monster callously flung his friend to the side, his back striking hard against a tree trunk. Moaning, his back aching, he relaxed to see the Monster continuing on his way.

Judson accepted that the Monster could not be made to do anything he did not want to do. The creature was almost a force of Nature, and such forces are rarely tamed by puny Man. He saw the back of the giant, now small in his visions, still stalking away from his only human friend.

Regaining his composure, Captain Judson dusted himself off. He was about to set off again in the direction of Katherine when he noticed the Monster. Judson watched in amazement as the creature suddenly halted in his tracks and began to grope about in the darkness. His long arms lifted and his fingers reached out, as if trying to touch something that was not there. It was, in fact, the same way the Monster was behaving earlier, as when such actions helped to navigate the *Tylosaur* to this central European state.

Almost robot-like, the beast began to follow whatever it was that seemed to be summoning him. Then he began to walk as if in a trance, perhaps operating on sheer animal instinct. Some unseen force, a powerful one, Judson believed, was acting upon the Monster, beckoning him and guiding him along to wherever it was he was being called.

Captain Judson called out to him, "No, wait! I know what it is! It's that weird sensation again, isn't it? It's just like it was back on the ship!"

The lumbering Monster, continuing on his way with no apparent destination, did not reply.

Rain continued to drench the Warren barn, which had been untouched by the fire. The ground had long turned to mud under the

downpour. Wilhelm felt his feet squishing into the wet earth as he entered the barn, his hand locked around his sister's wrist.

Katherine had been sobbing hysterically but was finally starting to regain her normal composure. Thankfully she had not actually seen the terrible happenings that have so recently taken place on the Warren property, but she had heard much, including the screams and wailings of dying men. And she would always remember the sounds of bullets and the heat of the fire that had consumed her home.

Wilhelm hugged her, pressing his hands against her back, then stepped back. Her lovely face was marked streams of tears. Even though she could not see her brother, she managed to train her eyes toward his.

"Wilhelm," said Katherine, her thoughts still centered on the man she called Jim, "why couldn't you have just left them alone? Left them in peace? They weren't causing me any harm. Just because their faces were ..."

"Caused you no harm?" the brother interrupted. "Katherine, please, listen to me. Those two ... men were the reason our house no longer exists ... and in its ruins are the remains of some of our friends. If you could have seen how they died, it was best that you didn't see."

"They were kind to me. I can't believe what you say about them is true, Wilhelm."

"Those two weren't ordinary men. Actually, I saw them before, emerging from the lake in some kind of fantastic submarine made to look like a sea monster. And by now the whole town must know that they were the ones responsible for stealing bodies from our cemetery."

"No, no!" she sobbed.

He pulled her close again. "The smaller one ... his face looked like nothing more than a mass of scar tissue. And the other one ..." The young man frowned as he imagined the brutish figure. "He was huge, a real giant, dressed in black. And his face and hands ... like he'd been sewn together. If the stories I've been hearing are true, then he fits the description of something called the Frankenstein Monster."

"No, I can't accept that," she said. Unable to say more, she buried her face in her brother's shoulder and cried.

Wilhelm wanted to change the subject. Thus, he related the story of how he had been freed from the town jail, but only at the cost of some of his friends' lives.

"I would have come back home sooner," he proceeded, recounting all of the events that transpired following his jailbreak, "but as I tried making my way from the beach to the

farm, I encountered a squad of soldiers. Figuring that they'd come back here looking for me, I thought it best to stay in hiding until matters cooled down a bit."

She brushed her face against his and, for the first time since being reunited with Wilhelm, she smiled. "Seems to me like you used the time away to good advantage, though I still can't get used to you in a beard."

Wilhelm rubbed his dark whiskers. "At least it saves me some time every morning shaving," he laughed.

"But yes," she said, "you did the right thing. I've lost count of how many times that General has been here looking for you and asking questions. I'm glad I didn't know where you are. I not a good liar."

"After a while," he went on, "I finally came across some of my old friends—friends that were secretly attempting to overthrow the General. It was about then that Johann ... poor Johann, told me of the same fiends that I saw come out of that submarine. For a long while we stayed together, planning ways to defeat the invaders who have taken control of our land. Then there was the whole issue of the body snatching."

"In doing some surveillance work we came upon some of the soldiers. We thought that might be a tremendous opportunity for our cause. And so, we waited in ambush. We were very lucky. It turned out that there were only a few of them, one of which was driving a wagon which, luckier still, turned out to be hauling a load of guns and explosives. Jumping down from some high rocks, we took them by complete surprise. Grabbing their guns, we disposed of the soldiers with their own weapons, got rid of their bodies, confiscated what they were hauling and eventually, after things died down somewhat, made it back to the farmhouse."

"But what about Jim?" she cried again. "You didn't have to drive him away. I got to know him. And I swear to you, deep within his heart he was basically a good and decent man. You know that I can tell such things."

"Katherine," he said, trying not to sound condescending, "how can you call 'good and decent' a man who robs graves ... and associates with someone who could be the Frankenstein Monster? Good lord, sister of mine, do you actually care for that man?"

"Jim couldn't have robbed any graves," she said. "I doubt either of them could, whether one was this ... this Frankenstein Monster or not."

"If only you could have seen them," Wilhelm emphasized again, "the way the one you call Jim so expertly drew his revolver and shot down one of my oldest friends. And the



way that Monster ...

Wilhelm paused, deciding it was not in his sister's best interests to hear anymore of the grisly details. He moved away from her and looked into those large tear-filled eyes.

"Look, Katherine," he said, "I want you to stay here in the barn where it's safe and dry."

"Why?" she inquired. "What are you going to do? Are you going somewhere?"

"Before long the rain will have washed away their footprints. I still have that wagon and all those weapons. They're all right here in this barn. Now I have to track down those two before they get the chance to kill more of us, or worse, come back here for you."

Katherine was still thinking of the man she so dearly cared for when she said, "Then let me go with you. If anything happens to Jim I

want to be with him."

"No," he responded. "I'm not taking you out into that storm to follow a pair of fiends. You're staying here!"

The woman was still objecting, tossing her head so that her wet hair flew about in all directions, as she rushed forward to grab her brother. But her strength was no match for his. With a quick turn, Wilhelm slipped out of her grasp and seated her in the soft hay of the barn.

Then he hastened to the far end of the barn where the wagon waited. Wilhelm considered using the wagon, but then decided to stalk his quarry on foot. A man surreptitiously making his way through the woods would arouse less attention than a rickety old wagon, especially one that, when last seen, had been in the

possession of some of the General's soldiers.

Wilhelm began to inventory some of the weapons that he planned to use against Judson and the Monster, and perhaps the General and his soldiers, too. Among the things stored in the wagon were several dozen sticks of dynamite.

There was a fire blazing in Wilhelm's eyes as, carrying a high-powered rifle, a couple service pistols and three dynamite sticks, he strode out into the rain following the moonlit impressions made in the mud by the Monster's heavy boots. The rain splashed against the brim of his hat, making vision somewhat difficult. More thunder sounded overhead as the downpour continued, possibly an omen of foreboding, he thought.

Still, Wilhelm felt rather confident carrying the explosives under his shirt and with the loaded rifle strapped to his back.

CHAPTER XII: CONFRONTATION

The general, almost with paternal pride, watched as Victor Frankenstein completed stitching the forehead of the sixth composite body that the scientist had put together. Wearing the white smock as always, Frankenstein finally stepped aside, took a deep breath and wiped a thick accumulation of sweat from his weary-looking face.

There came another crash of lightning that illuminated the sky seen outside the castle's windows.

"There," Frankenstein said, wiping his perspiring hands on his surgical smock and turning away from the half dozen patchwork bodies, "the last one is finished."

"Impressive indeed," critiqued Rogaro, stroking his beard.

Frankenstein walked to the window to watch the progress of the night's storm.

"You were right, Rogaro," the scientist stated grimly, his delivery suggesting that he would have preferred that the storm had never arrived. "This storm should be with us for a long time. In a way, that's a pity."

Rogaro the sorcerer grinned, knowing that the success of Victor Frankenstein relied not only upon the storm and the scientific items provided by the General, but also on his own considerable mystical powers. Without Rogaro there would be no Victor Frankenstein in this room today; that was a given. And it was that knowledge that prompted the wizard, on occasions like this, to envision himself as the true despotic ruler of all Crovakin, with this pompous and overstuffed General groveling at the hem of

his robes. That ambition notwithstanding, of one thing Rogaro was certain: As long as the bond between him and Frankenstein existed, as long as it was through his powers that the scientist remained alive and active creating monsters, his own safety was secure.

"This is almost unbelievable!" exclaimed the overweight General, almost marching up to the array of tables upon which were stretched the six prototype bodies that would soon be his to command. "I know heart transplants and other such miracles of science are commonplace in today's world, but science has never witnessed anything as sophisticated as this before. Truly fantastic!"

His spine tingling both with horror and anticipation, the military leader looked upon each of six creatures. Each one was a giant, at least eight feet in height. Each sported the telltale metal electrodes at the temples and a long forehead scar to show where the skull had been put back together following the insertion of the brain. Yet each one of the beings also possessed its own distinctive physical attributes.

The first of the six prized creations, waiting silent and motionless for the spark of life to be imparted to its giant frame, also had a row of unrightly stitches running down the center of the forehead, from the hanging bangs to its mere stub of a nose set high between its closed eyes. The lips of this monster of Frankenstein were somewhat torn, revealing the creature's uneven teeth. The blue pants and jacket and the red t-shirt hung sloppily about its massive frame.

The second monster was completely bald and certainly appeared to have been assembled in the spirit of Frankenstein. Its clothing included a loose-fitting red shirt that suggested the apparel of an earlier century. The mouth of this creature was open in an expression suggesting stupidity.

Horror number three was, arguably, the most ghastly in appearance. Its countenance greatly emphasized the bone structure beneath the skin. The sockets of the closed eyes, beneath the vaulted brow, were deeply lined. And the teeth resembled long tusks, some of which protruded in every conceivable direction from the partially opened mouth. Its hair was nothing more than a mass of long, black strands.

The fourth spawn of Frankenstein, bare-chested and wearing blue trousers, possessed an almost skeletal, its withered, corpse-like skin clinging close to the skull. Its dark hair was long and flowing, hanging to below the powerful shoulders. Although a marvelous creation of science, the thing would have been less of an eyesore had its head been fresher

before being inserted into its container of preservative fluid.

The fifth creature, a Frankenstein monster clad in tattered clothes including a shaggy fur vest, had an almost white complexion and almost reddish brown hair, its upper lip protruding out over the one below.

And the sixth of these creatures, which would become commandos in the General's army and which was already clad in an appropriate though tattered uniform, also had sewn stitches on his chin and cheeks, which enhanced the patchwork appearance.

The General tugged at the restraining straps that confined the six lifeless monsters to their respective tables. He smiled, confident that the straps would hold the creatures down until he determined that it was safe to release them. Then he gazed toward the large transom looming overhead – the wooden barrier that would soon be opened so that the raging storm could receive these six offerings of Victor Frankenstein and permit the transpiring of their electrified births.

"How much longer?" the General grunted furiously at Frankenstein, who was still at the window observing the weather conditions outside.

"Soon," Frankenstein replied, coldly, "very soon, General. The storm has yet to reach its peak, when all of its energies will be at their strongest. But I promise you, we only have a short while to wait."

The General moved up beside the melancholy figure at the window.

"Now, what's the matter, Comrade Frankenstein?" he said, grinning.

Frankenstein shot a hard glance the General's way. "You know what the matter is," the scientist answered, his eyes narrow. Then he looked back outside, noting a great jagged flash that ripped across the night sky. "You know how I didn't want to participate in this work of filthy creation ever again, especially for a cause such as your own. You know that, even though I don't want to do such things anymore, I am being forced into giving life to these six ... demons."

"Soldiers, comrade," the General said. "Not demons, not monsters, but soldiers. Just think of how many human lives will be saved by not having to go into battle, now that we'll have these super-warriors to fight our battles."

"Lives on your side, General," said Frankenstein. "What of those on the other side?"

"Their lives are of no consequence to us in times of war."

"A war instigated by your side, I should add."



"Nevertheless," the General went on, unaffected by the scientist's words, "my superiors will be very thankful to you... to all of us - upon your success. And who can say? Once you have reanimated a sufficient number of these warriors, perhaps you will be that much closer to returning to your eternal rest." Quietly the General laughed.

"I wonder if there will ever be a ... 'sufficient number,' General."

Frankenstein said no more to the General. There was no reason to arouse the commanding officer's anger and risk not being released from the bond that grounded his borrowed physical body on this mortal plane. He realized that, while he complied

with the General's mad demands, there was at least some hope of his eventual escape back to the realm of the dead.

As Victor Frankenstein watched the furies of the elements outside, he remembered in vivid detail the terrible events of that one November night, more than two hundred years in the past, in his castle in Ingolstadt.

An awful chill rippled through his body as he wondered what would truly transpire here this night. Would he again become possessed by the God-like sensations that had overcome him before, the feelings a mortal experiences when he discovers that he can accomplish something that no one other than the Deity can do. That feeling that had brought his former life to such a tragic end ... would it overtake him again this night?

Silently, Frankenstein prayed that all such feelings died with his body those many years ago.

The storm was almost at its summit when Frankenstein, Rogaro, the General and everyone else in the workshop reacted to a commotion outside the building, and one totally unrelated to the storm. The shouts of a man could be plainly heard through the open windows.

"Stay away from me!" It was a man's voice, loud and angry. The sound of a bullet cracked and then cracked again. "Keep away from me, whatever you are!"

Reacting to the sounds, Rogaro and the General dashed up to the window beside Frankenstein and looked out through the rain. Morley and the soldiers were promptly gazing out from other windows.

The commotion was originating outside near the front door of the castle.

It was difficult to see just who it was that was standing in the shadows below, and which was clearly the thing that the moonlit soldier was using as a target. The person, if that was what it was, was partially obscured by dark bushes. Whoever he was, standing there under the rain, he was incredibly large — as big as the six creations on the six tables and formidable enough to terrify the brave soldier standing guard in front of Rogaro's castle. In the moonlight, the guard could be seen shaking and cowering, even as he raised his rifle again.

"Keep back!" he ordered. "Take another step and I'll shoot again!"

The large man emerged from the shadows, each step bringing his mighty frame noticeably nearer to the soldier.

The guard fired another shot, which tore through a massive shoulder.

The bullet's moving target roared in pain and defiance.

Then the giant moved, lunging viciously toward the guard, who, as the creature rushed upon him, could do nothing more than scream. And that sound was cut short, replaced by a sickening crack!, as the giant easily hoisted the man above his head and nearly broke him in two.

Victor Frankenstein's heart seemed to drop into his stomach.

For there, in the castle courtyard, stood the more than eight-foot tall monstrosity that Frankenstein had made with his own hands, put together piece by piece so long ago, and then given life in an experiment that would be repeated here this very night. The probability of the Monster being alive was so slight as to be impossible, Frankenstein pondered. That his creation was also here and now was approaching infinity in its odds of probability.

"The Demon!" Victor Frankenstein shrieked, his voice carrying over the sounds of growling below and the thunder tearing across the heavens. "This thing I made and brought to life ... he's back!"

The General tried to get a better look.

"Are you certain?" the officer gasped, stretching his neck through the window in hopes of getting a better look. "Then it wasn't destroyed in that explosion."

Even as the General gawked incredulously at the huge figure, which was now tossing the broken and lifeless body of his guard into the bushes, he saw a half dozen more soldiers surround the Monster, their rifles trained at the giant. Two of them fired their weapons, sending more hot pain tearing through the brute's mismatched limbs.

The Monster, though wounded again, moved like a juggernaut. He tried battling all of the soldiers at once, but they were too great in number. The first two attackers died instantly as the beast's hands sought their throats and squeezed. Another soldier fired a projectile which imbedded itself in the beast's leg. More bullets, more pain, more torn flesh ...

Hurt, bleeding, the Monster could feel himself becoming weaker.

Frankenstein prayed that his original creation would perish under this onslaught, that, although the Demon had proven himself before to be able to survive attacks by gunfire, that the number of bullets now unbedded in that giant body would have a cumulative effect, killing him. But in truth the scientist knew that such would not be the case. Given time even those wounds would heal, thanks to the almost miraculous self-healing abilities that he had infused into his creation. He knew that the bullets now hurting the Monster's body might temporarily weaken the beast, but before long they would have an opposite effect — increasing the Demon's hatred toward humanity.

Finally the General raised his pudgy hands as one of his soldiers blasted the Monster with a machinegun, causing the brute to reel about making the most blood-curdling roars of pain.

"Wait, men!" the General commanded. "Don't kill it! Don't damage it anymore. Let the Monster live!"

Into the General's mind had sprung another plan. This Frankensteinian creation was already completed and alive. Perhaps a quick lobotomy might add a seventh super-warrior to the still lifeless six, another giant killing machine that would be subservient to his will and that of his superiors.

But that plan may already have been too late. The Frankenstein Monster was already toppling to the ground, his body bleeding profusely.

The soldiers, meanwhile, hearing their commanding officer's words, finally stepped away from the giant form now lying motionless at their feet.

"Frankenstein!" the General shouted, waving his hand at the man in white. "Follow me! Outside!"

Reluctantly Victor Frankenstein obeyed the heavyset man in the uniform.

Victor Frankenstein, the General and the soldiers that had survived the Monster's wrath stood in the relentless rain gazing down at the body of the Monster.

The giant form lay face down, its clothing marked by numerous punctures covered with blood that was mixed and washed away by the downpour.

"Well, Comrade Frankenstein," said the General, "how does it feel seeing him after all this time? Kind of like a family reunion?"

"Only if that reunion took place in Hell."

"Hmmpff! Too bad we had to kill the thing. We might have added it to our ranks."

The scientist shook his head. "The Demon isn't dead," he corrected him.

"Not dead? But he must have been hit by —"

A low moan issued from the Monster, although it sounded as if coming from some other world.

"Ye gods!" exclaimed the General. "Then maybe we can use the Monster after all."

Frankenstein, meanwhile, had turned away from the bulk lying at his feet, lowered his head and covered his face with his hand.

"Oh, Lord in Heaven," Frankenstein implored, a thunder clap seemingly replying to his words, "how could you have done this? Haven't I been punished enough for my sins ... my crimes against my loved ones, against Nature itself? How could the Fiend have found me after so very long?"

"No need to be so melodramatic," said the General, laughing. "This little coincidence is going to work to our advantage. And I for one don't, as the Americans would say, 'look a

gift horse in the mouth."

As the Monster's limbs slowly began to move and the beast began to crawl up to his knees, Rogaro joined the small crowd.

"He's not dead," observed the wizard. "Truly amazing."

Rogaro and the General kept staring at the Monster with incredulity. It was one thing anticipating the completion of their project; but to behold with their own eyes the living result of Victor Frankenstein's original experiment affected them both profoundly. This creature now groveling before them in the mud was not some dormant thing, like the stitched-together bodies in the laboratory. This thing lived and breathed and refused to die. And now it was staring at the two men with hate-filled yellow eyes.

Then the Monster saw and recognized the man in white.

"You!" the Monster said, finding speaking difficult considering the number of wounds he had just acquired. "The one ... who thought he ... was God ... and made me!"

Victor Frankenstein wanted to flee but could not turn away from his hideous progeny.

"So, Victor ... Frank-en-stein," the Monster said, his straight black lips forming a snarl, "my cre-a-tor." As the giant spoke, more blood could be seen issuing from his visible wounds. "We ... meet again, my creator! And now I know ... what led me ... here."

Frankenstein stared, his pale face a mask of animosity and disbelief, at his own handiwork of an earlier century. And as he stared, his Demon, struggling to suppress the pain, arose to his feet, towering above all of the men gathered around him. The giant pressed his hands against some of the more severe wounds in an attempt to retard their bleeding.

It was apparent to everyone now, soldier or otherwise, that the Monster was still too weak to pose much of a threat if he chose to attack again.

"Don't come near me!" Frankenstein said as his creation moved closer to him. "Don't touch me with those murderous hands!" He stared into the Monster's sulfur-colored orbs. "Just because I created you does not mean that I have to accept you. You've done nothing but cause misery ... create horror ... murder everyone I've ever loved since I brought you into this world."

"You wanted ... to create a man," growled the Monster.

"Yes," answered Frankenstein. "But what I got was you!"

Meanwhile, Rogaro, the General and the latter's soldiers listened with heightened

curiosity and interest to this verbal exchange - this indictment from another age.

The Monster's face collected the rain so that his scraggy hair made streaks against his skin with the rainwater. His enormous arms went up and the soldiers automatically stepped back with weapons ready.

"Don't shoot," ordered the General. "I don't think he's going to attack. At least not now."

As commanded, the men lowered their rifles.

Then the Monster slowly brought his hands toward his maker's throat, the long fingers tauntingly circling the scientist's flesh.

"Go ahead. Kill me! Get it over with!" Frankenstein pleaded. "If you can accomplish that, then maybe all this horror will be lifted from me and I can rest in peace."

But the Monster's hands did not tighten about Victor Frankenstein's neck. Instead they relaxed and lowered to his sides. The expression on his scarred face grew long.

"No!" the Monster snarled. "I will not ... grant you the peace ... of death. As before, you must first know ... the guilt. You must live ... until you take responsibility for creating me ... and for the lives you have ... forced me to take!"

The beast said no more for the present. He lowered his head, his chin touching the cloth of his black turtle-neck sweater that he wore under the black jacket. Then, staggering from side to side, he moaned.

"Quickly!" the General commanded, motioning furiously with his hands to his men. "Surround him while he's still weak. Do not kill him and do not hurt him. But escort him inside the castle and lock him in one of the old dungeon cells. Our wizardly host will show you which one is the strongest. Now - do it!"

"Wait!" Victor Frankenstein said as the Monster, aching from his wounds and the bullets still remaining inside his body, allowed himself to be led away by the General's men. "It will be better if I go with him, too. Don't worry, I'll be safe and shall return shortly. The Demon is the last being on this Earth that I need fear."

"Just don't try anything out of the ordinary," the General warned him. "Because we can give you no cause to fear!"

Rogaro smiled and nodded at the General. "Now come on," the commanding officer said, "before we all drown out here."

CHAPTER XIII: THE CREATOR AND THE CREATURE

Rogaro led the way, followed by the General, Victor Frankenstein and the soldiers, several of which, all holding fully loaded high-powered rifles, accompanied the weakened Frankenstein Monster, through the rain and back inside the castle, all of them leaving muddy tracks on the ancient stone floor.

"This way," said the old wizard, motioning with a bony hand for the others to follow, as he led them all down a stone staircase that connected with a lower level of the castle. "Down here," he said, waving his bony fingers towards a dark recess in the castle's basement, his Zodiac robes flowing as he moved.

"Let's get some light down here," the General commanded.

Responding to their leader's words, two of the soldiers rushed down the dark staircase, and then lit torches that had been positioned in the walls, bringing illumination to the dank place.

Nudged along by rifle butts, the Monster, still dazed after his experience outside the castle, allowed himself to be moved through the shadowy chamber, clumping awkwardly down the stairs in his elevated black boots.

Victor Frankenstein was among the members of this small parade. He coughed for several seconds, his lungs assaulted by the musty, bad-smelling air. Clearing his throat, he walked with the other members of this group into the basement chamber.

Reaching the bottom of the stairs, Rogaro joined in the torch lighting. Before long the cold, chipped walls were all brought into view in all their obdurate glory, the mismatching bricks visible everywhere one looked, various connecting tunnels branching off in many diverse directions. The chamber the group was now walking through wound and twisted as Rogaro and the soldiers ignited more torches.

"Whoever designed this place must have been had a bad dream the night before," stated the General as the sorcerer continued leading them through the main chamber.

"Obviously the architect's mind was on this other than aesthetics," quipped Rogaro.

The walls seemed to come alive with weirdly shaped shadows as the group walked, seemingly moving in the flickering light cast by the many torches. After walking what seemed to be a very great distance, Rogaro halted his companions at the far end of the chamber before a closed door having a barred window.

"This old dungeon cell should hold the Monster," said Rogaro, opening a lock that

permitted him to slide away the heavy metal brace that barred entrance to the cell. Pulling open the door, he continued, "It has lost none of its strength since the castle was first built, and it has confined its fair share of violent prisoners."

The soldiers looked toward their real leader for an order. The General nodded and the man edged the lumbering giant inside the ancient cell. The beast did not resist, but only sat down atop a primitive cot covered with foul-smelling straw.

Rogaro and the robed man followed the creature into the solitary room.

Moving with the grace of some specter from Hell, the medium inched his face close to the visage of the Monster. Rogaro sneered as he stared into the beast's half-open eyes. He looked toward the General.

"If you don't mind, 'Comrade' General," he said, "I would prefer that, at least for now and without the intrusion of uniforms and weapons, that Frankenstein and I be with the Monster alone. Don't worry, I'm quite confident that we will be safe."

Taking out another Cuban cigar, the General frowned. "But we will be outside the cell, just down the corridor. And at the first sign of a problem ..."

"Of course," the wizard replied with a sinister smile.

Motioning to his men to leave the cell, the General complied with Rogaro's request and left only Rogaro and Victor Frankenstein in the cell with the Monster.

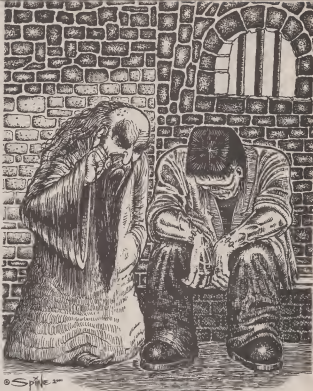
"You have done a splendid job on this creature," Rogaro said to Frankenstein. He gazed at the Monster's features, which seemed even more hideous in the wavering light of the torches. "You might say that both of us have had success with our own respective 'secrets of life and death.'"

Rogaro shot the scientist a quick glance that made Frankenstein squirm self-consciously.

"Yes," the wizard said, his mummy-like face smirking, "remember Victor Frankenstein, that it is I, Rogaro, who really controls the fate of your immortal spirit." Then he moved his attention to the Monster. "And you remember, you ugly assemblage of corpses, that if anything happens to me, your power over your creator will be over ... for his soul will be instantly returned to the peace of death."

A snarl issued from behind the Monster's pressed together lips. He started to rise from the cot, the giant hands slowly inching toward the sorcerer's neck.

Without fear of the Monster, Rogaro raised his hands. "Remember what I just said," the



wizard told the beast. "Harm me and Frankenstein dies. Then he will again be at rest, leaving you alone in the world to face your own horrors. You don't want that, do you?"

The Monster shook his head, his damp hair flopping about. "Frankenstein ... must live ..." the brute stated, his voice almost echoing in the cavern-like chamber. Sitting back down on the cot, he turned to stare with animosity at this human being that had created him.

"Good," said Rogaro, grinning widely, "good. Then I won't have to waste any time worrying about the likes of you." The wizard certainly did not trust the General. And Rogaro knew that, with the Monster not

wanting harm to come to his maker, he now had one more iota of protection in the event that the General or the other military men chose to turn against him.

The sorcerer eyed the Monster more intently and a look of confusion appeared upon his skull-like face. For several moments he stroked his beard, his mind contemplating the situation. Then he raised an index finger.

"What perplexes even me," he said to Victor Frankenstein, "is this element of coincidence."

"Coincidence?" Frankenstein responded with little interest.

Rogaro nodded. "Yes," he replied. "The coincidence of this being turning up here ... in such an isolated part of Europe as

Croakia, of all places, here ... now ... just when you, who created him and more than two centuries later, were restored to life."

"I have no idea," answered Frankenstein, "and almost as little interest. For one who was once dead myself, such a coincidence seems almost trivial by comparison."

Listening to their conversation, the Monster raised his large hands and began to feel for the stale air that filled his dungeon cell. The sulfur-colored eyes looked out from below the giant's Neanderthal-like brow, shifting in their sockets to focus upon the man in the strange robes.

"Something ... brought me here," the Monster said, his eerie-sounding voice almost echoing through the room. "A while back I felt them ... forces ... feelings I did not understand ... leading me to this land."

"Oh, so that's it," the wizard said, nodding affirmatively. "Obviously there exists some kind of bond between the two of you that transcends the relationship of mere creator and creature. A psychic bond, if you will, perhaps somehow related to the mystical powers I employed in returning you, Victor Frankenstein, to this world of the living. Perhaps when I brought you back, I also created this bond - which attracted him to this very spot on this very fateful night. I know that as a scientist, a kind of person not generally willing to accept things supernatural, that might be difficult for you to understand."

"I don't really care," stated Frankenstein succinctly and bitterly. "But the fact that I accept my presence here attests to my acceptance of things beyond the realm of our own senses."

"Maybe ..." the Monster interjected, "there is ... something more."

"More?" asked Rogaro.

"Now we talk ... alone."

The wizard looked at Frankenstein, who sighed, then nodded. "Yes, I suppose I should have words with him. Perhaps I do owe my creation at least that much."

"Of course," said the wizard. "I'm sure there is much catching up that the two of you need to do. I'll be outside ... with our soldier 'friends, if you need me."

Looking back only once, Rogaro smiled and walked out of the Monster's cell. As a precaution, however, he closed the cell door, slid back the brace and replaced the lock. Then, with a theatrical sweep of his robes, he strode away from the cell and down the torch-lit corridor.

Victor Frankenstein and the being he had created so long ago were now the only two

living beings in the musty dungeon room.

For a long while the two of them - each, in his own way, having survived the grave, although in bizarre and unrelated ways - glared at one another. Indeed, their gazes seemed to be impenetrable, eyes of each of them blazing with resentment and hatred.

Finally, the scientist spoke. "What did you mean when you stated that there might be some other force that brought you here?"

"Maybe ..." the Monster replied, "it is because ... you gave me life."

"And how could that - a scientific experiment - be related to anything psychic or supernatural?" Frankenstein laughed.

"I ... do not know," the Monster said. "Perhaps ... in giving me life, you somehow gave me ... some of your own ... soul."

Frankenstein laughed even louder. "Nonsense! For that was one of the areas where I went wrong. I gave you a body and animation. But what I failed to give you was a soul - even a piece of one."

"Maybe ..." the Monster continued, "the two of us ... are really one. Perhaps I am ... a part of you ... or a reflection of you. Two sides of a ... single being, with a bond between us ... that cannot ... be severed. And perhaps that is how ... I was lured here to this place ... to find you. Like finding ... myself."

"You mean like the old legend of the doppelgänger ... an other self? No! I refuse to believe anything like that," Victor Frankenstein said to his creation. "But frankly, it makes no difference to me why we are both here at this place and in this moment. Why won't you just kill me and then yourself? Then we can both be at peace." Looking imploringly at the giant, Frankenstein felt a single tear running down his cheek.

In reply, the straight black lips of the Monster parted and a chilling snarl was uttered from behind his clenched teeth.

"If I die ... and you die ... you will be at peace, yes," the Monster growled. "But that must ... *not* be!"

Frankenstein turned away from the Monster and started pacing the dry floor of the cell.

"Why not?" the scientist asked, his voice pleading.

"Because, even though my ... existence has been so ... miserable," the beast said, "I have come to ... cherish it clinging to it. I live ... and I will continue to live ... forever!"

"Oh, why did all of this have to happen?" whined Victor Frankenstein. "Why did I ever attempt to learn those damnable secrets of life and death? My dream was to create a

living man. I had no intention of creating a Fiend ... a Demon ... a Monster!"

"No, Victor Frankenstein," the Monster said, his voice rich with emotion, "you did not create a Monster. You did create ... a man ... one that became a Monster."

"You? A man?" Frankenstein started to laugh again, this time almost insanely. "You presume to call yourself a man? You, who murdered my favorite brother William, my best friend Henry Clerval, my beloved Elizabeth on our very wedding night, so many that I held dear, how dare you call yourself a man?"

The Monster's eyes seemed to burn with near-uncontrollable rage. Stiffly he arose from the cot again, his strength by now plainly beginning to return. He raised his massive hands over his head and shook them.

"No, Victor Frankenstein, my creator!" he exclaimed, his voice shrill. "I was ... a man, although one not given life ... according to Nature's way. And a man I would have remained ... if you had accepted me as ... your creation. But no, you chose to ... reject me, your Adam ... because I was ugly. You ... brought me into a world that hated me ... despised me ... wanted only to destroy me! And when I requested ... but one boon ... one thing that might make me ... happy, you refused! You abandoned me ... denied my only request in this world. And that is why, Frankenstein, I became ... your Monster!"

Frankenstein, momentarily forgetting that he would have welcomed death at the Monster's giant hands, took several steps backward.

The Monster continued to rave on, his massive fists tightening. "Now ... we both live again!" He walked closer to his maker, whose eyes were now staring wide open at him. "And so now ... I ask you again, my maker. I request that you create for me ... a woman! A mate! One as hideous and loathsome in appearance ... as myself! But someone with a beautiful spirit like ... like Katherine's! And then, when you have done this for me, we will ... the two of us ... go away and never bother anyone ... not ever again. Do this for me, my creator ... while you have this ... second chance. Please, I beg of you!"

By now tears were streaming along the Monster's scarred and stitched face, tears now glistening in the light from the torches. They looked pleadingly from beneath the heavy white eyelids at the man who had made him and instill his body with life.

"I'll never do anything for you," replied Frankenstein in defiance of the giant. "Not after what you did to those I cared about.

Especially not after you took from me my darling Elizabeth!"

With his words still resounding in the cell, the Frankenstein Monster's face became a wild mask of rage. With titanic force the creature slammed his giant fists into a wall, knocking off pieces of stone. A roar of anguish bellowed out of his wide-open mouth.

Moments later came the sound of the door lock being opened. In a flash, two armed soldiers opened the door and rushed into the room, one of them battering the Monster's head with his rifle butt, stunning the creature.

"Hurry, Comrade Frankenstein!" the other soldier exclaimed, as the other guard continued to batter the Monster with his weapon. "Get out now before the beast gets out of control. And if anything happens to you in here, the General will put me and Ivan there to death."

As he was told, Victor Frankenstein hurried out of the cell. By then, however, Ivan was already a bleeding cadaver lying on the cell floor. The other guard slid the metal brace across the door and clicked the lock back into place.

Frankenstein stared through the bars and back into the cell. He saw his original creation grasp the bars on the window of the door, his orbs almost fiery in their intense hatred, his teeth gnashing. With superhuman effort he tugged at the bars, trying to dislodge them, but was still too weakened from the bullets imbedded in his artificially created body to yank them free. Soon, however, his many wounds would be healed, and then...

Victor Frankenstein smiled slyly at the creature behind the bars. Then he turned away, hurrying down the corridor to join Rogaro, the General and the others. Behind him roared the echoing voice of the Monster, repeatedly cursing his name.

CHAPTER XIV: THE SOUNDS OF LIFE

"What do you mean, you can't operate on the original Monster's brain?" roared the

General, his voice carrying over the sounds of thunder crashing outside the laboratory's open windows and the sounds of electrical apparatus inside the building. The officer was standing off to one side of the room, next to the wizard Rogaro and the latter's servant Morley.

Victor Frankenstein was doing his best to avoid the heavy-set man wearing the officer's uniform. His attention remained focused on what he had been doing for the past hour,

mainly adjusting the numerous dials on the workshop's main control panel.

"I asked you --!" the General spoke again. Without looking away from his controls, the scientist finally replied, flatly, "And I've already told you, enough times that I should not have to repeat it again, that there just isn't any time left for such an operation." His hands continued, like living creatures unto themselves, across the array of knobs, dials and switches. "Besides that, the Demon presents to me a quite personal problem, one that I would never expect you to comprehend. No, the Fiend should not be operated upon. He should be destroyed!"

The General, however, refused to accept Frankenstein's words. The original creation, with his durability and superhuman strength, would certainly make a worthy addition to his initial squad of undying human fighting machines. With smoke streaming from his Cuban cigar, the military leader paced away from the sorcerer, stormed up to the control panel and glared at the scientist.

"The first Monster is already put together," the General insisted in his loud and commanding voice. "And he's already alive and getting stronger every moment. I'm a practical man, Comrade Frankenstein, and I cannot see letting something we already have in our possession -- something with the power of that horror down in the dungeon -- to go to waste. The Monster will join our first army of walking deadmen. And, if you ever hope to rest in peace again, you will make it so. Now, go down to that cell, take your surgeon's instruments with you, drug the beast and then..."

Still manipulating the controls, Victor Frankenstein looked away from the main panel long enough to get a look at the storm conditions outside.

"Even if I wanted to perform this operation now," said the scientist, still not looking at the man to whom he was speaking, "it would not be possible."

"And why not?" the officer demanded to know.

Frankenstein was still gazing out the window. Great jagged bolts of lightning, followed soon by near-deafening explosions of thunder, erupted in the sky as though acting out some primeval battle of the gods.

"The storm is now at its peak," Frankenstein observed, as the celestial display outside almost shook the stone walls of Rogaro's of ancient fortress. "All that concerns me now is to exploit the power of that storm to bring those six pathetic things to life. If we lose the opportunity to tap into that storm when it is at its summit, we may have

to wait for another such storm to come our way."

"Hemmmph!" said the General, chomping hard on his cigar.

"However," Frankenstein went on, "if you are adamant that I perform a lobotomy on that Fiend's brain now, I can always postpone this experiment for a while and risk losing the storm that is with us now. If you prefer to wait for the next storm?"

There was no need for more than a moment or two for the General to think over the situation. The side of his round face vibrated and he puffed several times on his cigar. The veins of his forehead seemed to bulge under his skin. For he knew that, once again, someone whom he thought was totally under his control was taking advantage of a "no win" situation.

"All right, Frankenstein," the General finally grunted.

Rogaro's emaciated face smiled slyly from across the room, but even at this distance the General noticed the subtle change in expression.

Taking a deep breath, the General added, "Let's begin then, while the storm is at its height. Bring those six warriors to life!"

"As you command," replied the man in the white laboratory smock. "If everything is functioning here as it should be, and if the powers of the heavens are as generous with me as they were once before, it shall be done!"

Leaving the General and the control board, Victor Frankenstein rushed up to the row of tables to which all six of the horrors he had fashioned together rested, waiting for the first sparks of their new lives. The metal electrodes stuck into their temples flashed in the glare of the lightning, almost seeming to be the heavenly electricity to come down and strike them. Each of these plug-like devices was connected to electrical cables that snaked about the floor to connect with a large machine.

Assuring himself that there was no longer any need to delay, Frankenstein gave each of the monstrosities a final cursory inspection, then hurried over to a table atop which was a display of various chemical concoctions. From there the scientist produced a vial of liquid of his own invention and a large hypodermic needle. Then he injected the fluid -- a variation of the long sought after "Elixir of Life," which he had discovered more than two centuries ago -- into the pale left upper arms of each of the motionless creations.

Setting aside the now empty hypodermic needle, Frankenstein walked with supreme

confidence toward a small group of soldiers who had been, this moment included, observing the goings-on in this workshop with both amazement and revulsion.

"The transom!" Frankenstein shouted to one of them, his voice battling the natural forces raging outside and those crackling and sparking about his own laboratory equipment. "Open it!"

In immediate obedience, one soldier pulled the chains that opened the large transom that loomed above Frankenstein's workshop of creation. With the sound of rattling metal and grating wood, the transom opened, revealing a wide expanse of cloudy sky. Only the wooden canopy that had been erected by the General's men above the transom kept the waters of the storm out of the laboratory and short-circuiting Frankenstein's electrical apparatus.

Gazing skyward through the opening, Frankenstein checked to make certain that the towering electrical terminals that the soldiers had installed atop the roof were still in place. They were, pointing skyward and connected to the wires and cables that eventually joined with his six creations.

To a half dozen other soldiers, among the physically strongest of the General's band, Victor Frankenstein, with rapidly growing control over his entire situation, barked more commands. "Now, you — begin working those chains. Raise the six creatures to the open transom! Hurry, while the storm is at its mightiest! We haven't a moment's time to waste! And above all, be careful!"

The soldiers, their muscles straining, started turning the great metal wheels that operated the pulleys connected to the six tables.

The General resumed his former position next to Rogaro. The two men, like the mute servant Morley standing beside the wizard, were speechless. Clearly Victor Frankenstein was, at least for the present, the master of this castle. They watched as the scientist continued to shout his orders to the soldiers and the tables bearing their lifeless burdens slowly but steadily began to rise off the floor. Craning their necks, the spectators witnessed the tables being elevated toward the opened transom to receive the power bestowed by Nature itself.

Suddenly, the entire workshop became illuminated as if by cold fire as the lightning continued to crash overhead.

As the six patchwork beings were hoisted to the uppermost part of their skyward

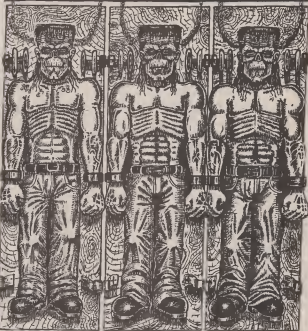
journey, Victor Frankenstein dashed to the main control board, the General again rushing up to his side as a silent observer. With no regard for the big man's rank or power, the scientist pushed the General aside in order to devote all his attention, without any distractions, to the many switches and gauges and dials arrayed in front of him. And as he worked these controls, the many machines and gadgets in the room came almost violently alive, zapping and crackling with great arcs and firings of electrical energy.

Indeed, a strange thrill began to course through the scientist's body and spirit as he worked, controlling via his touch the vast amounts of power dancing about this bizarre stage he had set. It was the same sensation

that had overcome him so many years ago and which had, in fact, once destroyed him. The feeling that he, a mortal named Victor Frankenstein, was like God. A feeling that, Frankenstein now knew unequivocally, that his own unique personality was unable to resist. He was, in truth, addicted to what he was doing and there was no shirking that addiction.

And in this moment, Victor Frankenstein knew without question that, his eventual fate be damned, it was his destiny to create human life!

Estatic at this realization, the scientist continued to turn dials, to open and close the great knife switches, to make, in fact, everything — and every person — in this



© SPINART

"workshop of filthy creation" perform exactly according to his demands.

"Yes! Yes!" he exclaimed to the heavens. "Let my creatures live!"

Frankenstein's eyes were aflame with wild anticipation, glaring in the light of the electrical splendor performing perfectly under his masterly direction, as he gazed up toward the six things that he had knitted and stitched together.

The General, Rogaro and Morley were looking up toward the transom also. The officer's cigar no longer burned, but the butt continued to dangle from his partially opened mouth.

Rogaro rubbed his withered hands together. "Thrilling, isn't it?" he said to the General. "And to think, the miracle of creation unfolding here this night would not have been possible if not for my own miracle of bringing life to the dead."

The soldiers all watched what was going on in obedience to the General, but their faces displayed myriad expressions, most of them reflecting the horror they were experiencing. The lips of some of them silently moved as if forming prayers, perhaps with the intent that Frankenstein's experiment would not be successful.

Morley, meanwhile, only stared with eyes bulging and an unpleasant expression on his face at the display of electrical power that now dominated the workshop. His body was tense, sometimes jerking in little spasms, as his vision rapidly switched from one sparkling machine to another. There was an evil present in this room, he thought, an intangible menace that not even a seasoned murderer like himself could control or overcome. An evil far more terrible than the wizard who was his master or the General who had instigated the chain of events that resulted in what was now going on inside and above this castle.

Rogaro might have wanted Morley to stay at his side during this experiment. But the pockmarked servant had experienced enough of Frankenstein's madness, at least for now. Like a shadow, while his master's attention remained fixed on what was happening above, Morley silently and fearfully made his way, unnoticed by everyone present, along a wall and out of the laboratory.

Victor Frankenstein's concentration remained entirely focused upon what was going on and what he was doing. Fingers expertly manipulating controls, his face had become a mask of madness. His body moved about behind the control panel, sensations of infinite power coursing through him, as the play of electricity, both natural and man-

made, seemed to be approaching a deafening and blinding climax.

The scientist's gaze was affixed to the six horrors that hung overhead in the open transom. The creatures' bodies were suddenly enveloped by white-hot squiggles of lightning that played with the lifeless flesh. And the lightning's ferocity increased!

"Now!" Frankenstein yelled, his voice almost drowned away by the sounds assaulting him from all directions.

No one heard his voice over the commotion.

Above the roof, an explosion of lightning – one that almost tore asunder the heavens – crashed overhead, zapping from one of the giant rooftop terminals to the next, transmitting the power of the storm along the great snakes of electrical cables, through the twelve temple electrodes, and into the six man-made bodies. The electrodes themselves were sparking with a strange energy glow.

The General opened his mouth wider, his long dead cigar butt dropping to the floor. He took a step forward and craned his neck to get a better look. He could see, even at this distance, that the coils connecting the creatures' electrodes to the outside terminals were glowing now with raw power.

Frankenstein turned dials, increasing the power output of his machines, sending his collection of electrical devices into new choreographies of sizzling power.

Above him and out of the view of the spectators below, the temple electrodes of the six bodies continued to spark and glow.

In the workshop, everyone watched with grim expectancy. Every eye strained to get a better look at the six bodies, straining to detect the first signs of even the slightest movement.

Then, from overhead, a loud and low moan thundered down upon the assemble group. A hand of the first of the creatures twitched, then jerked spasmodically, this action soon followed by similar movements by the other five assembled bodies. Scarred and stitched arms strained at their restraining straps, trying to break free.

Rogaro and the General grinned at Victor Frankenstein, observing as the scientist stepped away from the control panel, his eyes wide and his chest heaving.

But Frankenstein ignored the two men who were watching him. With a grand gesture more suited to the theatre, the scientist raised both hands, his arms stretching upward, as though to touch those six beings that they had so painstakingly created from the dead.

Then he began exclaiming, "They're alive! Alive! All of them! They're alive, alive!" His

body buckled forward as he raved, one arm swooping around and inadvertently smashing a display of beakers and test tubes.

It required the strength of three of the General's soldiers to restrain and calm down the madly triumphant Victor Frankenstein.

The Monster of Frankenstein was slowly awakening in his dungeon cell to familiar sounds. Terrible sounds – the crackling of electricity, the crashes of thunder – the kind that he remembered from his first day of existence in this world. For a seeming eternity the sounds seemed to be a part of his nightmares, which were dominated by the image of that first human being his newly transplanted eyes had ever beheld, that young man looking down at him with a look of horror etched upon his handsome face...

Victor Frankenstein!

The giant had suffered these dreams many times in the past, and he even had vague memories of those images during his more than two centuries of imprisonment in that block of Arctic ice.

But this time, as the Monster gradually slipped back into consciousness, he realized that he was not dreaming. And the sounds that he was now hearing were so loud, so strong, that they seemed to be making the very walls of his cell tremble.

Among the sounds was a familiar human voice, exclaiming his triumph over having yet again succeeded in bringing monstrous life into this world.

The white eyelids of the Monster opened with a start to reveal hating yellow orbs. The dark lips were drawn back into a ghastly snarl. The creature growled.

The Monster understood the truth. His creator, a being he had once seen lying dead upon a vessel in the Arctic and with whom he believed he shared some kind of spiritual bond, was doing it again – giving an unwanted life to some other miserable being like himself, a manlike thing which the normal people in this world would always loathe and try to destroy.

Flinging out his long legs, the Monster stood up on his high black boots. He barely felt the effects of the rifle fire anymore; evidently the special enzymes and antibodies that existed within his almost alien systems had done their work, dissolving away the metal bullets and sealing up his wounds.

He looked around the cell in which he was confined. The corpse of the man he had slain was still lying there, not yet having had time to start decomposing. Perhaps it would remain there until the worms began to feed upon it and the flesh started its purification

Stiffly, the Monster lumbered up to the cell window and peered out from behind the bars. His limbs, despite the rapidity of his own healing abilities, still ached somewhat, although most of his famed superhuman strength had returned and was already surging through his mammoth frame.

The creature's mind continued to dwell upon the situation he was imagining happening upstairs. For a while he thought about the infliction of life into yet another "monster" into the world, a being perhaps equating himself in ugliness and misery. He knew that he had already regained enough strength to rip the cell door off its hinges, then rush upstairs and stop whatever dreadful work his creator was performing up there. Stop it before Frankenstein brought his latest experiment to its climax.

"I must stop Frankenstein!" the Monster granted to himself as he thumped towards the locked door.

As the Monster's face peered out from behind the bars of his cell-door window, he beheld the soldier standing guard outside holding a machinegun. Instinctively the uniformed man set aside his weapon and grabbed a blazing torch, yanking it out of its wall receptacle.

To the guard's surprise, however, the Monster did not growl at him, nor did he try to escape. Instead the giant simply stepped back away from the window, cautiously evading the flames. More surprising to the man in uniform, what appeared to be a legitimate smile was slowly appearing upon the Monster's hideous face, his teeth shining almost like highly polished ivory in the glow of the soldier's torch.

"Don't try anything," the soldier warned the Monster, waving his flarebat at the cell window. "I know how you're afraid of these things. Try to get out or to harm me, and you'll get a hot taste of this!"

To the soldier's bewilderment, however, the inhuman prisoner made no attempt either to escape or to kill him. Indeed, by the look of confidence upon that terrible visage, it seemed obvious that the Monster could escape his cell at any moment of his own choosing.

Nevertheless, the soldier did not replace the torch, nor did he relax his guard on the creature.

Oddly, the Monster was still gazing calmly out the window of his cell door. To the guard it almost appeared that the expression on the face of this giant patched together from pieces of deadmen was a wistful one, almost suggesting a young person experiencing his first love.

For another kind of thought was forming inside his transplanted brain. What if his maker had, at least, acquiesced to his needs and greatest request? What if what the Monster was hearing from upstairs was, in fact, the birth of the female companion he had for so long been craving. Could it be that the Monster had been lying here unconscious for weeks or even months, his consciousness lost in a coma, during which time Frankenstein had the noble change of heart and the sufficient time to create for him a female as monstrous as himself? He had remained dormant for much longer periods of time, after all, as when for more than two hundred years he had been preserved solidly frozen in that block of ice.

What if, he wondered, his ears were now witnessing the dawning of his own bride?

Again the Monster's thoughts drifted to images of his maker Victor Frankenstein. That Frankenstein was again enjoying the experience of creating life the beast had no doubt. Did he have the right to hope now – even to pray – that his plea was finally being heeded and a female created like himself would soon be nestled in his powerful arms?

He wanted with all of his heart to believe that he had slept through the creation of this bride.

By now the Monster's usually hateful eyes had lost all traces of any animosity. The beast was noticeably more relaxed and at ease. He was, in truth, waiting patiently for the object of his monstrous desires. Perhaps, the brute thought, if he waited a while longer he would soon be seeing his hideous mate striding through the torch-lit chamber outside and into this very cell.

He saw something through the bars of his window, someone approaching. It was not, however, his intended bride, but rather the familiar form of Captain James Judson creeping quietly through the dungeon tunnel, motioning to the Monster to remain silent. In the captain's raised hand was a formidable-appearing dagger.

Judson was upon the guard's back within moments. As the Monster's friend drew the long blade through the uniform and into the soldier's back, the guard uttered a quick gurgling sound, as if blood were backing up into his throat, and then, dropping his torch, fell to the floor.

Captain Judson's attention went to the cell door.

Instantly the pale fingers of the Frankenstein Monster sought the bars of the window. The titanic muscles of the brute flexed.

"Wait!" Judson exclaimed with a loud

exhalation of air. "Let me do it. No need to waste your strength if you're still recuperating from those bullets."

Finding the key to the door lock on the guard's corpse, Judson removed the lock, then slid back the heavy bar from across the door. Pulling the door open, he beckoned the giant to exit the cell.

The Monster looked confused.

"I followed you here," said Judson. "I followed you until you encountered those guards outside the castle. But when I saw how hopelessly outnumbered you were, I thought it best to wait for a better opportunity to try helping you. I also managed to get a glimpse upstairs ... in the lab."

Finally the Monster spoke in his graveyard voice.

"You saw ... " he said, his voice still bothered by damaged vocal cords that had still not completely healed, "... what was in ... the laboratory?"

"Not much," said Judson, "What I did see was through a window. And I had to be careful to be seen. I didn't want to get caught."

"Did you see ... her?"

"Her? You mean ... Katherine?"

"Not ... Katherine," said the Monster. "Her!"

Captain Judson was not able to answer. From somewhere down the corridor came the sound approaching footsteps that immediately drove him and the Monster into the shadows at the bend in the tunnel. The footsteps were louder and the person making them would be within their sight in moments.

A sickening feeling stabbed at Judson's gut. He knew that, just seconds away, he might be forced to kill again and he already bore enough stolen human lives on his conscience.

The Monster, however, did not share Judson's ever-amassing guilt. He realized full well that, if he and his human friend were to succeed in escaping from this dungeon, another murder carried out with efficiency and without remorse, would most likely be necessary. He steeled himself, ready to strike.

At last the intruder rounded the corner. He was big, had a pockmarked face and, when he opened his mouth to react to Judson and the Monster, could only make inarticulate grunts.

Morley gasped, staring in horror at the Monster and the man with the burn-scarred face.

The Monster acted in a flash of movement. A gigantic yellow hand flew forward and seized the dumbfounded man by the shoulder. Then the creature roared like an animal into Morley's face.

Morley tried to call for help, as if momentarily forgetting that he had no tongue. All he could accomplish was to gag in terror and, without success, attempt to squirm out of the Monster's iron-like grip.

The pockmarked visage twisted into a false face of horror as his shivering body was brutally hurled across the room to strike hard one of the brick walls, an awful cracking noise resounding through the chamber as his skull slammed and cracked open, leaving behind a smear of glistening scarlet.

"I saw this one leave the lab," Judson said, eyeing Morley's corpse.

The Monster nodded, feeling no remorse. "One last enemy ... to deal with."

Hastily, Judson looked about the chamber, returning to the body of the guard just outside the Monster's former cell. The soldier's machinegun was where he had left it. "Luckily I know how to use one of these," the captain said, picking up the discarded weapon and feeling the security of its weight. "We may soon see how well all that training I had with these pays off."

Again the Monster nodded.

"Now follow me," Captain Judson said commandingly to the Monster, much as he had formerly given orders to the erstwhile members of his submarine crew. He began to move silently through the corridor, the Monster's feet clumping against the hard floor as he followed Judson. "You won't believe what you're about to see up there. We're going to the lab."

The laboratory, the Frankenstein Monster thought.

Her!

And the Monster smiled with sinister anticipation.

CHAPTER XV:

DEAD MEN WALK

Even outside the castle and in the rain, the air was alive with electrical energy as Captain Judson led the Frankenstein Monster to one of the laboratory's open windows. Fortunately they encountered no more guards during their run from the dungeon to the courtyard, all the General's men now inside the workshop observing with wide-open eyes the miracles of science occurring there.

"Take a look in there," Captain Judson said, crouching outside the window and peering over the ledge. He nudged the Monster to move in closer.

Anxious to get the first glimpse of his imagined new bride, the Monster quickly edged his massive bulk closer to the window until his hideous countenance was framed by its angular parameters. His dull watery eyes

were like twin beacons of yellow fire as they stared at the spectacle now being played out within the laboratory.

Electrical and chemistry apparatus, not unlike the kind that his hated American foe, Dr. Bart Winslow, had used to revive his once frozen body, cluttered the room. The giant could see Victor Frankenstein, raving like a lunatic as the soldiers went to his aid. He could see the man in the Zodiac robes standing near the man in the army officer's uniform. And he could see the objects of everyone's attention, which, as other soldiers worked the great wheels and pulleys, were being slowly lowered from the rooftop transom down, into the room.

But there was no female creation ambulating across the room in her first moments of life in this laboratory of Victor Frankenstein.

Life there was there, nevertheless. This the Monster could see as six large tables were carefully lowered into the room - ghastly, terrible, hateful lives in the form of six manlike giants, each one of them as repulsive as the life that had been infused in his own mismatching assemblage of a body those many decades ago.

The Frankenstein Monster observed, horror-struck, his stolen heart on the verge of bursting, as the six creations, their tables resting on the floor, struggled to break free of their restraining straps. The sight of these monstrosities was almost unbearable to behold. But there was something beyond their very physical appearances that stabbed at the Monster's very being like a hot dagger ...

None of these horrors was female!

Above the six creatures the transom slammed shut, the sound resounding through the room. Victor Frankenstein, having calmed down somewhat, walked up to a control panel and, his hands working rapidly, shut down the array of machinery.

Judson noticed that the Monster's hands were clutching hard the stone wall below the window and that the expression on the giant's face was truly frightening.

"Frankenstein!" startled the Monster, grinding his teeth. "Frankenstein ... Frankenstein! He did not create ... a woman for me! He created ... six more ... six more just like ... me!

"Six more monsters!"

Then, with a loud howl, the giant started to move through the window. He would have entered the laboratory in this way had not Captain Judson's arm flew to the back of his neck and grasped it firmly.

"Wait!" Judson pleaded, the rain running down and along the craggy scar tissue that

was his face. "Not just yet. Let's just watch what happens for a while."

"But ..." the Monster started.

"We'd be no match for all of those soldiers with all their weapons, not to mention those six ... things."

The gaze of the Monster shifted away from the workshop to his friend.

"Yes ..." the beast snarled, scowling. "We will wait ... for now. But just for ... now."

"Good, my friend," said Judson. "But you know, I think the best thing for us to do would be just to leave this hellhole and return to the submarine. We could be away from here before anyone would even know we're gone. Away and free."

The Monster shook his head. "I go nowhere ... until I know the fate of Victor Frankenstein."

Judson's bumed mouth smiled. "Somewhat that's what I thought you'd say," he replied. "And I'm not one to desert a friend. All right, then, we'll stay here for a while. But we must remain quiet, at least until we know what they're up to."

And for a long while, Captain James Judson and his eight-foot-tall friend remained standing in the rain, shivering from the cold, as they kept silent and watched.

"Excellent, Frankenstein, excellent!" said the General, elated to see the six new creations as they squirmed about their tables, still attempting to free themselves.

Victor Frankenstein rushed up to meet this sextet of strapped-down horrors he had created and endowed with life, as the new monsters continued to tug at their leather straps.

"Those straps are strong enough to hold down even the strongest gorilla," the General announced, as Frankenstein continued to marvel at his own success. "Now let's see how your super-warriors function ... and also how successful you were in dulling their brains."

A fiendish smile twisted the features of Rogaro the sorcerer - an expression that did not pass unnoticed by the General - as Victor Frankenstein shouted the order at his new creations:

"You are alive! All of you!"

The six masses of sewn and clamped together flesh tamed their heads, they dull eyes, now all bulging open, stared at the white-clad man addressing them.

"And I gave you your lives!" the scientist continued. "The only reason your filthy organs and tissues have been given a new opportunity at life is because of me, Victor Frankenstein. None of you, in your present

form, has ever lived before."

One of the six monsters moaned, as if acknowledging what Frankenstein was saying to him. Then another moaned, and another, until all six of them were producing their own bizarre chorus of vocal noises.

"I created you made you from the dead. Thus, you will obey me, do whatever I say ..."

Their moans became louder.
 "And you will obey anyone I command you to obey. Do you understand?"

The creatures, each one raising a hideous head off his table, looked confusedly at Frankenstein and then at their neighbor. They seemed to be understanding what Frankenstein had just told them. A few of them attempted to speak in acknowledgement of the scientist's word, but their reply was no more than a cacophony of inarticulate groans and grunts.

The General was beaming with anticipation through all of this activity, for the experiment – almost at its end – seemed to be successful. Briefly he imagined the new station he would have among his people once they witnessed these fruits of Victor Frankenstein's genius.

"You all have tremendous strength in those limbs that I gave you," Frankenstein went on, his eyes wild, his nostrils not offended by the smells of death emanating from the creatures' once-dead body parts. "And you all possess the power to tear asunder those straps."

Then, without any warning, Frankenstein suddenly stopped addressing his six creations and turned his attention toward the General.

The military leader gave the scientist a curious look. "Why are you stopping now?" the General asked.

"I haven't stopped," Frankenstein smiled. "I merely want you to witness the end result of the brain operations I performed on these pathetic things. Watch."

Again Frankenstein spoke to those six terrible beings palpating atop their wooden rests. "The next voice that speaks to you will give you some commands. As your creator, I order you to obey this man. Do you understand?"

The six creatures responded, each of them, in its own distinctive way, making a nauseating gurgling sound that clearly demonstrated their acknowledgement of the man in white standing over them.

"Now," Victor advised the General, "command them to break free of their bonds."

"Yes, yes!" the General said, his eyes appearing as if they were about to pop out from their sockets. Anxiously he rushed up before the creatures and let his voice bellow

over the sounds of rain and wind and thunder. "I command each one of you to use that great strength your creator gave you and free yourselves from those straps! I command you to do it now – for the glory of our returning government!"

As if they had been programmed, the six misshapen brutes obeyed the uniformed man, each one of them commencing to struggle and strain against the strong restraining straps. At last, after exerting but a modicum of additional effort, the monstrous sextet snapped apart their bonds.

Beaming, the General said, "Now get up ... and line up, like soldiers in a squad, in front of me!"

Again the half dozen creatures obeyed in the manner promised by their creator. They arose stiffly off their tables, then lumbered upon shoes and boots and bare feet, taking their place in an informal line before the chubby man in the officer's uniform.

The General virtually exploded with glee. "Comrade Frankenstein!" he yelled triumphantly. "You have done it! We have done it! This is precisely the successful outcome of this experiment that I was anticipating. You and Comrade Rogaro here," he went on, glancing at the skinny old man in the robes, "shall indeed be rewarded ..."

The wizard smiled and then politely bowed his head.

"... In time," the General added.
 Rogaro reacted, cocking an eyebrow.
 "The only reward I desire," complained Victor Frankenstein, "is the peace and solitude of the grave."

"There you go again," laughed the General, "with you melodramatics. Can't you be a bit more cheery just this once, given what has been accomplished here tonight?"

The feelings of sheer power and near-deification, which Victor Frankenstein had felt earlier this night, was already dissipating. The resurrected scientist had indeed accomplished a miracle again, this time sixfold. And for a while it was truly like it had been on that infamous November night during the late Eighteenth Century.

Now, however, Victor Frankenstein craved only release from this world of mortals.

"I do not care about power," said Frankenstein, "or anything else that will result from my work." He looked over at the General and then at the six horrors that he had made, each one of them staring blankly awaiting additional commands. "All I care about is my release, which I beg you to give me. To let this assumed body die and dissolve away so that my spirit can again be at rest."

The General laughed at the man in white so furiously that his heavy body shook.

"No, no, no, comrade," said the General, finally managing to calm down. "We can't let you rest just yet. This is just the beginning of our ... relationship. After we've field-tested these patchwork beauties, to see how successful they will be at wiping out half the population of this insignificant state, then we'll return to my homeland and *really* put you to work. I can just imagine an assembly line in which all the components are human body parts!" Once more the General erupted with laughter.

Outside the window and standing in the rain, the Frankenstein Monster and his scar-faced human friend had heard and observed enough. Neither of them bore in their embittered hearts any real love for the human race, save for the lovely sightless girl named Katherine. But imagining six more ambulating horrors, subservient to this mad military leader to attack and kill, was enough to spur the twosome into action.

Still unnoticed by the assemblage who was still watching the awkward movements of the newly created monstrosities, the Monster and Captain Judson started to push themselves through the open window. The Monster required no weapon for what he was about to do, although Judson still clutched his purloined machinegun. As the Monster entered the laboratory and his heavy boots thudded against the floor, he attracted the attention of one of the General's men.

"Look there!" the soldier hollered, snapping up his rifle so that the butt pointed directly at the yellow face of Frankenstein's Monster.

The soldier never had the chance to squeeze back the trigger. For even as his finger began to press back against the metal, a deafening burst of machinegun fire almost cut his body in two, bringing a flowing mass of gore upon the laboratory floor.

The Monster shot a glance at Judson, the still-smoking weapon held tightly and ready to fire again if necessary.

"Victor Frankenstein! Again you have ... betrayed me!"

"Good God!" Victor Frankenstein shouted. "My Demon! He's loose! You see, I told you he should have been destroyed!"

Growling, the Frankenstein Monster slowly advanced towards both his creator and the General. From the expression on his pale visage, made even more unsightly by the long wet hair hanging down over his ears and brow, there was no doubting his intentions. He raised his enormous fists, ready to strike.

"Have your men use their weapons on him!" Frankenstein shouted as loud as he could.

"No!" the General protested as the giant stomped nearer, the great fists tightening even more as they prepared to initiate some terrible onslaught. "I have a much better idea." A foreboding grin appeared on his face.

Turning with military precision, the General glared toward the six creatures, whose dull eyes were still gazing in his direction. He raised his hands as if commanding his troops on the battlefield.

"Obey me!" he barked the order. "Destroy the two intruders. Don't let them live! And make sure they suffer!"

The six monsters responded, snarling threateningly.

Two of the creatures lunged awkwardly toward Judson, who fired his machinegun at the advancing squad. A spray of bullets ripped through their bodies, spilling blood, but the creatures kept on coming. Judson continued to fire until the weapon was uselessly empty. Still the ugly pair stomped toward him. Swinging the machinegun like a club, the captain did no more than infuriate the hideous stalkers.

There was no recourse other than to flee. Judson turned and ran, haphazardly stumbling against one of the worktables, crashing through various pieces of laboratory glassware and spilling their chemical contents. The creatures, their movements being among the first they had ever executed in their new incarnations, were also awkward and clumsy in their attempt to reach their prey. Nevertheless, still determined to obey the commands of the General, they pressed onward after their scar-faced quarry.

At the same time that Judson was trying to evade his two pursuers, the other four creatures, all equally clumsy, rushed toward the original Frankenstein Monster.

"Yes!" shouted the General with delight. "Destroy him! Tear him into his component parts! Then Frankenstein can rebuild him—according to my specifications!"

The General watched with pleasure as the six undying soldiers, surrounding the Monster from all sides, moved in for the attack. Not dwarfed by the size of the other creatures, the Monster was obviously concerned over their superior number.

"Get him! Get them both!" roared the General as he continued to observe the conflict unfolding before him.

Rogaro, meanwhile, had been silently watching all of the chaos around him. "Here," he cackled, yanking a machinegun away from one of the soldiers. He strode



across the room toward Captain Judson, as the latter attempted to take refuge from his two pursuers behind one of the larger units of electrical apparatus.

"What are you going to do with that?" asked the General.

"There's been enough time wasted this night already," said the wizard. "I'm going to finish that one off!"

The General reacted with surprise to see the sorcerer aim the weapon, about to spray the man in the khaki fatigues with bullets.

Rogaro fired, but was not accustomed to using firearms.

Moving quickly, Judson darted behind the machine, the bullets striking it and blasting off pieces of metal and wire.

"If only I had the time to conjure up one of the Dark Gods' demons," complained

Rogaro, lowering the firearm, then again taking aim.

"Stop!" commanded the General, as both Rogaro and the two creatures stalking Judson stopped what they were doing and looked over to his direction. "Don't bother with him for now. Why don't we let him witness the fate of his ugly friend?" He laughed again.

Peering out from behind his hiding place, Captain Judson could only watch as his friend and only source of security began to battle the first four of Frankenstein's horrors, and then the two that had been after him. He saw the Monster fight valiantly, his long arms lashing and thrashing about, his fists and feet colliding with the recently dead flesh of his attackers. But there were simply too many of them, each one of them programmed to kill and possessing the strength required to kill

even one as formidable as himself.

For almost a minute the Frankenstein Monster seemed to disappear under the mass of collective horror enveloping his giant body. Then came the sound of something big and heavy dropping to the floor.

"Stand aside!" the General ordered.

Obeying once again, the six creatures stepped backwards to reveal their huge adversary now crumpled upon the floor. The Frankenstein Monster did not move, nor did he utter a sound.

"Can he be...dead?" asked Victor Frankenstein.

Instantly the General hurried to the motionless body now taking up a considerable space on the floor. To assure himself that the beast was no longer a threat and feeling ultimately secure in the presence of his six new super-warriors, the commanding officer gave the eight-foot-tall body a hard kick with the toe of his regulation boot.

There was still no resistance from the Monster, and the only sign of life exhibited by the brute was a deep-throated moan of pain.

"I believe a lobotomy on this eyesore is imminent," he said, laughing.

With a grin that widened his fat countenance even wider than it was naturally, the General looked towards the man whose burned face could be seen looking over one of Frankenstein's machines.

"You were stupid and foolish to come here," the General told Captain Judson, advancing toward him. "You thought that one Monster and one machinegun could take us by surprise and maybe stop what we were doing? Now you see how wrong you were. Your sole chance of getting away from us now lies there on the floor. And it won't be long before your ugly friend is no longer quite 'himself' anymore."

"What are you going to do to him?" asked Judson, realizing the futility in trying anymore to escape.

"Give him a little operation," said the General. "But that does not concern you. But as to what does, who are you? Your clothes set you apart from those ignorant townspeople. A military man yourself? If so, in whose service? Did you get that face during a battle?"

The commanding officer halted about three yards away from Judson, who, keeping silent, raised his hands in peaceful surrender.

"In a way I wish you were from the town," said the General, staring into Judson's eyes. He turned away from his captive, marching past the six new creations of Frankenstein, and toward the door of the laboratory. "Then

what I am about to do now would have even more significance for you. Regardless of that, I think I'll keep you alive for just a little bit longer. I want to question you under more 'suitable' conditions and learn why you're wearing those fatigues. The answer may have military significance."

A chill of new horror was cascading through the captain's spirit, for his keen mind was already anticipating what the General was about to tell him.

Again the officer turned toward the six horrors.

"Soldiers!" the General ordered them, watching each one respond to his authority. "I want you to demonstrate to me what you can and will do. I command you to go out that door and march down into the town. Go into town and level it, destroy it! And kill everyone that you encounter... men, women, children, it makes no difference... in homes, on farms, in the streets! Go anywhere and everywhere in the vicinity. And don't come back as long as a single Crovakian still lives!"

"No!" shouted Victor Frankenstein, an hysterical look on his pale face.

"But if you slay everyone—" Rogaro began, his hands still bearing the machinegun.

"All right then," said the General. "My super-warriors will only decimate the population of Crovakia. I'll make sure they leave enough for you to rule in the aftermath of this... this test. But this test is highly necessary in order to prove the obedience, brute power and also the durability of our budding army."

Rogaro's skull-like face relaxed and he lowered the weapon, his finger moving away from the trigger. A subtle smile moved his lips, for he knew that, had the General not provided a credible resort, he would surely have emptied the weapon's ammunition into that fat body.

"Now go!" the General ordered, as the six misshapen creatures of Frankenstein strode past the still body of the scientist's original creation, lumbered out of the laboratory toward the front door. It would not be long before the monsters reached the town and the neighboring farms, including the Warren property.

Captain Judson felt himself become sick with horror. Only one image formed in his mind, that of Katherine.

CHAPTER XVI:

CLIMAX TO TERROR

The General hurried past the six Frankenstein creatures, stopping short of the front door that, when opened, would

release the stitched-together horrors to the unsuspecting outside world. He was still basking in his triumph, plainly assured that this grave test he was about to put his once-dead soldiers through would be a major success.

His "super-warriors" waited, huddled together to await his opening of the door.

"Now," he said, making a grandiose sweep of his hand, "go out there and carry out my commands!" He turned and threw open the door, expecting to see only the dark forest that led to the town, and not the lone figure standing below the archway at the threshold of Rogaro's castle.

The General stepped backwards, astonished that this man—any man, in fact—would have the temerity to come here on this most important of all nights. The young visitor was standing in a dry area, his back to the rain.

"I recognize you!" snarled the General. "Even behind that beard. I arrested you myself and put you in the town jail."

"A jail that is now in sore need of some repairs," said Wilhelm Warren, smiling sardonically.

The commanding officer looked Wilhelm up and down. Cradled under the intruder's arm was one of the General's own army-regulation rifles. His left hand held a portentous collection of dynamite sticks bound together by a winding fuse, in his other hand was a lighted match. The young man reacted immediately to the six horrors and reacted as if he were about to be ill.

"He's the one who escaped from jail!" stated one of the soldiers as he walked out of the laboratory to see what was happening in the connecting room. "I recognize his voice."

"Tell the General something he doesn't already know, lapdog," said Wilhelm.

The others were now crowding into the room, everyone freezing with fear at the sudden appearance of this young farmer and the terrible weapons he bore—weapons stolen earlier from their own supply wagon.

Wilhelm's cold eyes looked furtively about the room. He recognized the figure of Captain Judson, being nudged at rifle-point by one of the uniformed men, and he recognized Rogaro, although he had never seen him, from descriptions of the wizard banded about by village gossip.

"What do you want here?" asked the sorcerer, nervously. "You are trespassing on my private property."

"For now," said Wilhelm, enjoying his current position of power over so many of his recent enemies, "I want you all to go back inside that room." He pointed the dynamite sticks toward the laboratory. "No tricks. I can

aim and fire this rifle and take down several of you before any of you could shoot me – starting with our overstuffed General here.”

The General nodded approvingly at the six creations. “Return to the laboratory and do nothing,” he ordered them. “For the present, anyway.”

“Thank God,” said Victor Frankenstein, “at least your mad ‘test’ will have to wait. Perhaps forever.”

“We’ll see,” replied the General, under his breath.

Then the group, with the armed intruder following behind, walked back into the workshop-turned-laboratory. On the floor, the gigantic form of the Frankenstein Monster moaned, its long arms and legs already showing the first signs of movement.

“The Frankenstein Monster,” observed Wilhelm. “And from the looks of things, his six ugly ‘brothers’ are here, too. Is that what you’ve been doing in this evil place – making more horrors like him?”

“That is for you to figure out,” said Rogaro, his voice beginning to crack. The sorcerer was growing more nervous – no, frightened – with every passing moment. He was a man of rituals and spells, not of physical violence. His advanced age precluded his indulging in strenuous action and even firing the soldier’s machinegun had been a considerable strain on his fragile body.

So, he went on, ignoring the wizard and looking from the Monster to Captain Judson, “it seems that all of us ‘old friends’ are gathered here tonight, plus some equally repulsive newcomers. Good. That will make my job here all the more simple.”

A terrible snarl twisted Wilhelm Warren’s lips as he viewed in more detail, not only the two horrors he had discovered in his own home with his beloved sister, but also six more living giants. The fact that these others were here also – the hated wizard Rogaro, who for years had preyed upon the souls and fears of Wilhelm’s countrymen, and also the General and the soldiers who wanted to conquer his land – prompted the farmer to smile even more.

Now was the opportunity, most likely the only chance he would ever get, to destroy them all, ridding his homeland from their evil once and for all!

“This is too wonderful to be true,” Wilhelm said, his head turning so that he was able to scowl at every one of his hated enemies. The only person in the room for whom he bore no grudge or animosity was the young, pale-faced man wearing the doctor’s smock. But if that man was among this despicable brood, then surely he must be as bad as the rest.

“You’re all trapped in this room – by me like the human rats you are.” The match nearing its end, Wilhelm let it drop to the floor.

“You are going to destroy us all?” asked Victor Frankenstein, beginning to smile.

Quickly Wilhelm struck a second match, holding it ominously close to the dynamite fuse. “Why not? Do you know when I’ll have a better opportunity to fire my people and my homeland?” Not saying another word, Wilhelm casually brought the match to the fuse. There followed a sinister sizzling that slowly smoked its way toward their deadly target.

“No!” the General said, sounding more like he was praying. He contemplated the situation they were all in, unable to decide whether to chance Wilhelm’s rifle and make a dash for freedom, or to command his six monstrous henchmen to act. “Listen, Warren,” he begged, “put that out! Please! Put out that fuse – and I’ll see to it that you do not die alongside your countrymen! I swear you won’t! No, you’ll be rewarded, having anything you want! Money, power, women! I swear you will. Only put out that damned fuse!”

But Wilhelm stood firmly, unaffected by the General’s words, proudly holding the dynamite in one hand, the rifle still held ready under his arm.

Wilhelm shook his head. “Sorry, but it’s staying lit, even if I have to stay here and die in this foul place holding this.” He held higher the explosives for all to see. “Now, before we take this, I suggest everyone puts down his weapon.”

The soldiers looked hopefully toward their leader.

“Do as he demands,” the General said, sighing. “At least for now. Maybe if we all comply he’ll have a change of heart and let us go.”

Obediently the army members allowed their weapons to drop against the laboratory floor.

“You, too, sorcerer,” Wilhelm told Rogaro who, following several moments of indecision, finally dropped his machinegun.

“Don’t let us go,” implored Frankenstein, his voice rich with emotion. “It’s the best that we all perish here. Tonight. Now!”

“Don’t listen to him!” said the General. “He’s crazy!”

“Seems to me as if there’s more than just one crazy man in this ‘asylum,’” said Wilhelm.

The mind of Rogaro was now a veritable battlefield of conflicting thoughts. If he had the opportunity to get to his ancient tomes and

magical potions, he could intervene, dispatching some creature of Hell or some other netherworld to defeat the young man with the dynamite. But such witcheries demanded time, and that was one commodity that no one in the laboratory now possessed. Besides that, his present confusion was making clear thinking – the kind of thought required for his conjurations – and the directing of his usually powerful will more and more difficult as each moment passed.

There was, in fact, nothing anyone could do in this situation, no one save Wilhelm Warren himself.

The six new creations of Frankenstein were standing in one place stupidly, unable to make their own decisions as to what to do next. Their transplanted brains would not let them take command of their own actions. The General had conceived that and Victor Frankenstein had accomplished it.

Now everyone in the room, monster and human alike, was at the mercy of this young freedom fighter.

The fuse had already grown perilously shorter.

Victor Frankenstein breathed a macabre sigh of relief as he watched the fuse continue to burn away. In just a short while, perhaps less than a minute from now, all of them – including seven terrible beings of his own creation – would be no more than flying body parts in a vast explosion, with the beings he had made returning to their individual components. Rogaro would perish too, ensuring that this man who had already outlived his welcome on this planet would snatch no more souls from their final rest and trap them on this mortal plane.

Unlike Frankenstein, however, the General did not relish dying. “I beg of you!” he pleaded once more, trying to reason with the young Crovakian. “Anything you desire will be yours, if only you’ll...”

“Beg all you like,” responded Wilhelm. “But this is my one chance to get all of you. All of you who have brought so much misfortune and misery to Crovakia and its people. All of you will die tonight. And with your death will die whatever evil thing it was that you were all doing in this place.”

There was nothing to do now but wait – wait until that shrinking fuse almost reached the dynamite, at which point Wilhelm would do his best to escape through the nearest window. Yet, even if Wilhelm did not escape the blast, even if he became injured in the explosion that was to come or killed, it did not matter. For his land and his people would be saved from the oppressors trapped inside this room.

As the fuse continued to sizzle away, the farmer heard the sound of hooves from the courtyard. Reluctantly he turned his head enough to see the wagon that was approaching the castle from the trail leading into the woods. It was the same wagon that he and his friends had secured earlier from the soldiers. Someone was on board the wagon, a captive struggling against someone in the rear section of the wagon. When the wagon came to a stop and the captive called out his own name, he instantly recognized the voice ...

"Katherine!" he exclaimed, turning his head to see his sister being forced out the wagon by one of the General's soldiers.

Captain Judson reacted with a start. Until now he was afraid even to mention the young woman for fear of repercussions by the General. "Wilhelm," he finally shouted, "tell her to run away!"

The General also reacted. "I don't think that's quite possible," he said. "But I do believe our luck is about to dramatically change." A sadistic evil smile appeared on his face.

"That's Warren's sister," said one of the soldiers.

"His blind sister," added another soldier. "As you said before, Comrade Warren," said the General, "we are all here to die."

The commanding officer was grinning ghoulishly as he boldly rushed past Wilhelm, no longer concerned with the dynamite in his hand.

"What's the matter? Not so anxious anymore to blow us all up?"

"I ..." was all Wilhelm could say for the moment.

Hurrying out to the courtyard, the General grabbed the woman's arm and drew her away from the lieutenant who had brought her. Then he forced her struggling form across the courtyard toward the castle door.

"We found her wandering through the woods, General," the lieutenant said. "She was calling out for someone named Wilhelm."

"Wilhelm!" she shouted. "Where is he? Have you done something to him?"

"Wilhelm is perfectly all right," said the General, pulling her through the open doorway of the castle. "In fact, he's in here waiting for you."

"Katherine!" shouted both Wilhelm and Captain James Judson as the General forced the blind woman into the laboratory of horrors. He desired more than anything to rush forward to her aid. But doing anything now was impossible, thanks to the soldiers and also Wilhelm, who still regarded Judson

as an enemy.

"Jim? Wilhelm?" Katherine renamed.

"If you've harmed her ..." Wilhelm began helplessly, the dynamite still held tenaciously in his hands.

Frankenstein's Monster was finally making his way back onto his feet, just as he saw the young woman who had been so kind to him. She was drenched from the rain and was weeping.

"Katherine ..." he said in the voice that she had returned to him. The Monster also wanted to do something to save this human, to lash out and destroy everyone in the building that might harm her. But there was still no way to defeat six monstrosities, each one of which possessed strength equal to his own strength. And there was no time to do much of anything, with the fuse to Wilhelm's dynamite now but seconds away from igniting those explosives.

"I suggest, my heroic young comrade," the General said, increasing his grip on Katherine, "that you put that thing out ... unless, of course, you'd like to see your beautiful sister here be blown to smithereens along with the rest of us."

Wilhelm wasted no time in crushing out the fuse under his heel. Without being told anything else to do, he quietly left the dynamite on the floor, set down his rifle, pistol, knife and anything else on his person that could function as a weapon, and obligingly raised his hands in submission.

An array of rifles and machineguns suddenly snapped up, trained upon the young bearded man.

The General was beaming again, taking supreme pleasure in sneering at Wilhelm who was clearly no longer in control of this or any other situation. Without another moment's thought, the commanding officer spotted a hard wooden chair and, with a quick jerk of his arm, forced Katherine into it. Wilhelm noticed now that the fabric of her blouse had been torn, baring one shoulder and exposing the cleavage between her full breasts. And in that moment he could only imagine what horrors the soldiers might have inflicted upon his sister, this most important person in his life, between the time she was first picked up in the woods and her arrival here at the castle.

Katherine's long dark hair was still wet from the rain and streaming about the curves of her shoulders. Her sightless eyes were staring out at nothing. There was mud smeared on her cheeks and across the skin where her clothing had been torn. And there was a look on her face suggesting some helpless angel.

"What have they done to you, Katherine?"

asked Judson, trying to suppress tears.

"Don't taint her name with your foul mouth," warned Wilhelm, taking a step forwards to help his sister, as a pair of soldiers grasped his arms and held him back.

"Wilhelm ... Jim ..." she started, "I only wanted to follow you, Wilhelm. I never imagined anything like this would ever happen."

"Oh, don't be upset about what happened," the General mocked her. Stepping up behind Katherine, he placed his chubby fingers upon her shoulders and began to rub them.

"Don't touch her!" exclaimed Wilhelm, trying to make a move toward the General but unable to break away from his captors.

"Leave her alone," added Victor Frankenstein. "She has nothing to do with all this ... filth."

"Actually, you're kind of a life-saver," the General said to Katherine, continuing to massage the young woman's shoulders. "By showing up here, you've certainly saved our lives. Unfortunately I can't say the same for the life of your brother." He removed his hands and stepped up in front of her, eyeing her from head to feet. "You know, I never realized how lovely you were when we visited you on the farm. Maybe it's the water in your hair. Maybe it's ... whatever it is, I think you'll be needing someone to look after you, once your brother has, er, passed on."

Wilhelm, Judson, the Monster ... each one of them harbored the need to take action, but it was still not the time.

"No --!" screamed Katherine, attempting to get out of the chair, only to be pushed back down by the General and two of his subordinates.

All eyes were now focused upon the young woman seated helplessly in the chair, wondering what the General would do next. Even Rogaro was gazing at her, as if even one so ancient as he could be entranced by one so youthful and beautiful.

Those brief moments were all that Captain James Judson needed, the short lapse in what was going on in this den of ugliness, for him to act. Glancing quickly toward the Frankenstein Monster and then at his creator, he nodded and received back two simultaneous nods of approval. Then, moving with impressive speed, he bolted toward Rogaro and yanked the machinegun away from the surprised old man's frail hands.

"Now!" Judson shouted at the top of his voice. "Back off, General! All of you, back off!"

"What should we do?" a lieutenant asked the General.

The six monsters staggered about stupidly

but menacingly, awaiting their master's commands.

Judson spoke to Katherine's brother without looking toward him, keeping the machinegun trained upon the General. "Wilhelm, grab a weapon and get Katherine out of here. I'll make sure that your original plan is carried out here."

"I don't... understand," said Wilhelm. "Why would you...?"

"Just get her and yourself to safety and do it now!" ordered Judson.

A look of perplexity on his bearded face, Wilhelm took his sister's hand, almost simultaneously grabbing up one of the discarded rifles, and rushed across the room, looking back only long enough to give Judson a look expressing his thanks.

Judson's distorted face grinned back at the young man who might have one day been his friend. "And Victor," he went on, now looking toward the scientist, "I believe you have the power to protect us from these soldier boys?"

"?" A smile of understanding showed on Victor Frankenstein's face. "Yes! My creatures obey the General only because I commanded them to do so!" He turned his head, his vision scanning all six of the beings he had made and endowed with life. "You are all again under my control!"

The six beings nodded in acceptance again of their original master.

"No!" howled the General.

"Protect us from the soldiers," Frankenstein commanded.

The six horrors turned to face the General's men, none of them daring to retrieve his weapon or even to move.

"No! No!" exclaimed the General. "I am the master here! I and only I Rogaro, you have powers. Use them!"

"There is nothing I can do," he said, his frail body shivering noticeably. "I need time... ingredients... Morley! Where are you, Morley?"

Morley did not come.

"Morley!"

But Rogaro's servant did not even answer. And the wizard's body became rigid with fear, his mind wandering, unable to focus as he became increasingly cognizant of the possibility of his own death.

Looking toward the window at that moment, Judson saw Wilhelm reach the wagon with his sister. As the wagon bearing its two human burdens rolled away and into the woods, Judson finally scooped Wilhelm's abandoned dynamite off the floor. He handed the explosives to Victor Frankenstein, and then said, "Now, then, light it, my friend. For

tonight all of us will know a final peace. Is that all right?"

Victor Frankenstein, and then the Monster, slowly nodded.

"No..." the General raved.

"Do something!" Rogaro, unable to move from where he was standing, finally shouted to the General. "Stop him!"

But Frankenstein was already approaching a lit Bunsen burner.

Again the fuse was sizzling toward its destination.

"All of us will be destroyed here tonight," said Judson. "None of us deserves to live anymore. For all we bring to this world is pain, horror and death."

"No!" the General said again. "We won't die if I can regain control over those monsters. All of them! And I can do that, if their creator returns to the grave! Rogaro - return Frankenstein's soul to Hell or wherever you got it from!"

"I... I cannot!" Rogaro said, petrified. "I need... I need to concentrate and..."

"Oh, hell, then I'll send him back myself!"

That said, the General lunged toward Victor Frankenstein, taking him unawares so that the lit dynamite sticks dropped to the floor. His strong fingers pressed deeply into the scientist's throat and his victim did not resist. "Once I kill you and return your spirit to the..."

He was unable to complete either his threat of his intended murder, for the mountainous hands of the Frankenstein Monster were now encircling his own neck, snuffing out his words. The General's eyes bulged from their sockets as the beast exerted more pressure, and his fat face darkened, becoming purple. And as the Monster continued to squeeze, those eyes filled with tears, knowing that there was no hope either for him or his cause, and then filled with blood.

As the General's lifeless body crumpled in a heap on the laboratory floor, Victor Frankenstein, the dynamite still in his hands, climbed atop a table upon which one of his six new horrors had come to life.

"Listen to me, my creations! Turn upon everyone in this room wearing a uniform! And destroy that one, too!" He pointed towards Rogaro. "Make certain that the fiend never again does to anyone's spirit what he did to mine."

All six of Frankenstein's creations stalked the soldiers, some of whom managed to retrieve a lost weapon, several of them managing to get off a round or two of ammunition. But the monsters were too fast, too powerful, too brutal in their attack. Thus, one after another, the soldiers fell, each one of

their lives terminating in a bloody demise. Limbs were torn from uniformed torsos. Heads wearing regulation hats were ripped blood-gushing necks. Screams of agony resounded through the place.

It was Frankenstein's original Monster, however, that stalked toward Rogaro, the wizard finally mustering the courage to move backwards, his frail body banging hard against one of the six tables. He had to think, to regain his full awareness, to do something that would preserve his life, perhaps for another century.

But the Monster was almost upon him. "You brought back... Frankenstein!" he snarled, reaching out with his gigantic hands. "You made it so... Frankenstein could create... more like me! So he could... make me more unhappy!"

"I did what I was ordered to do," said Rogaro. "There was nothing I could..."

"You could have... said no!"

Meanwhile, the fuse in Victor Frankenstein's hand grew shorter.

Rogaro continued to plead in vain as the Frankenstein Monster grabbed the sorcerer and then, in one savage burst of violence, bent his fragile body, producing a sickening crunching noise, and then tore him apart. The man in the Zodiac robes screamed for only a moment, and that sound was barely heard above the sounds of the storm and the yells and moans of the other human and inhuman beings in the room.

At that moment, a look of complete satisfaction and peace appeared on the face of Victor Frankenstein, still standing on top of the table. He turned toward his original creation and smiled enigmatically at the giant.

"And so, my hideous spawn," stated Victor Frankenstein, his voice devoid of all emotion, "it seems as if you have proven to be my salvation. I suppose I should thank you for giving me peace again. But then, how can I truly thank one who has heaped so much guilt upon my conscience? I am sure the irony of my situation is lost on a brute savage such as you."

In that moment the Monster realized what he had just done. In destroying the wizard he was inadvertently destroying any chance of Frankenstein ever creating for him a mate. Desperately he reached out, hoping that, in some way, he might trap forever his maker in this mortal world.

But before the beast could make physical contact with him, the resurrected scientist's body began to steam, as if possessed of some strange energy, then bubble with fragment smoke. His flesh becoming the same intangible substance that had once emerged

from Rogaro's body, Victor Frankenstein was again no more than the moldering bones he had been for so long before his resurrection. Then his skeleton, becoming disarticulated, dropped to the floor, a heap of lifeless bones, the dynamite and its yet burning fuse falling from a skeletal hand and to the floor.

Throwing back his head, his long hair flopping about, the Frankenstein Monster opened his mouth and let out an anguished wail that, at least for a few moments, captured the attention of everyone in the room.

Lacking anyone else to command them, the six lobotomized creatures of Frankenstein, having finished off the soldiers, proceeded to lumber about randomly, crashing into equipment and into each other.

The burning fuse was now but seconds away from the deadly sticks of dynamite.

For one of those moments, Captain Judson and the Monster looked at one another, their eyes meeting.

"You have been my only real friend," said Judson. He held out his hand.

"Friend," the Monster agreed, clasping Judson's hand in a firm grip ..

Wilhelm Warren looked back occasionally toward Rogaro's castle as he and his sister continued their wagon ride through the woods. They were still relatively near the ancient building which, illuminated by the partial moon, could be clearly seen between the dark trees. At last the rain was dying to a gentle drizzle.

Katherine was still sobbing. "Couldn't we go back for Jim?" she asked. "Can't you understand that Jim is a good man, that he's worth saving?"

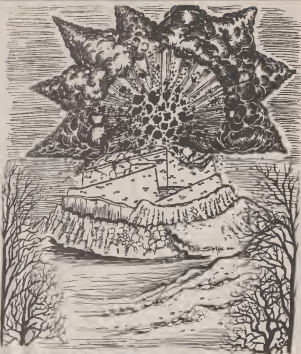
"Frankly," her brother said, "I don't know what to make of him anymore. In that last moment in the castle .."

As Wilhelm happened to look back again, the entire castle exploded in a seemingly endless display of destruction, smoke billowing out in all directions, tons of crumbling stone falling, crashing, destroying.

And for a moment, amid the sounds of destruction, there was heard a collective human screaming and wailing, as if of things spawned from death returning to their graves.

Wilhelm Warren shielded his sister's unseeing eyes from the blast, even though by now they were safely far enough away to avoid any of the debris, as the last remnants of the castle crumbled away to a mountainous heap of dust and stone.

The young man pulled his sister close to him, her wet black hair brushing against his chest. She was still crying and began to sniffle from her long exposure to the



elements. Looking to the sky, he saw a rising cloud of smoke and dust.

"Don't worry," Wilhelm told her, "it's all over. All of those fiends have been destroyed. You're safe now. Rogaro's death will no doubt be a boon to Crovakia. And with the death of that General, it will be a simple matter for me and my friends to drive away what remains of his soldiers from this region. Come on now, sister. Stop crying. We're going home."

Together, Wilhelm and Katherine continued through the moonlit woods. But the young woman did not stop weeping. In her mind, and no doubt in her memory from this night onward, was the lasting impression of a man she still loved, a man she had never seen.

THE END

BONUS FRANKENSTEIN FEATURE!



THE FRANKENSTEIN MONSTER LOOKS AT THE BODY THAT WAS EXHUMED. EVEN HE KNOWS THAT IN A CEMETERY, BODIES SHOULD BE IN THE GROUND COVERED WITH SOIL. HE PICKS UP THE SHOVEL ...



BUT OVER THE CREST OF THE HILL COMES A CROWD OF IRATE CITIZENS. THEY HAVE DISCOVERED THE MANY GRAVE ROBBERIES AND ARE SEARCHING FOR THE SHOULISH FIEND THAT COMMITS THEM.



THE MONSTER RUNS! HE MUST GET AWAY FROM THIS INFURATED MOB THAT IS AFTER HIM!

WITH GREAT SPEED, THE MONSTER DISAPPEARS INTO THE WOODS, LEAVING THE CROWD DISAPPOINTED AND ANGRY.

AND THE GRAVE ROBBER, STILL IN HIDING, HEARS WHAT THEY HAVE TO SAY!

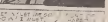
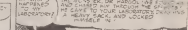
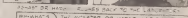
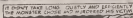
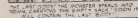
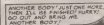
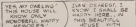
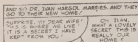


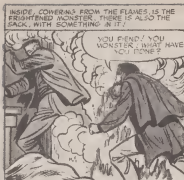
SO THAT IS WHAT THEY THINK! THEN I AM IN THE CLEAR, I AM NOT SUSPECTED! IF I COULD FIND THAT GIANT AND BEFRIEND HIM, HE COULD GET THE BODIES I NEED AND I WILL RUN NO RISK! I MUST FIND HIM!



THERE YOU ARE! WAIT! I AM YOUR FRIEND! UNDERSTAND! FRIEND! I WILL HIDE YOU FROM YOUR ENEMIES! COME... YOU CAN STAY AT MY HOUSE!







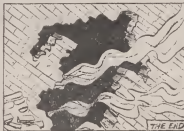
DR. HARGOL IS TOO NUMB TO MOVE, AS HE SITS THERE HOLDING THE BODY OF HIS DAY-OLD BRIDE WHOM HE HAD MURDERED. THE FLAMES GROW HIGHER AROUND HIM.

THE FLAMES QUICKLY ENVELOPE THE WHOLE ROOM, SETTING OFF A SERIES OF EXPLOSIONS FROM THE CHEMICALS.



IT IS OVER, FOR DR. HARGOL IS DEAD--AS MUST BE THE MONSTER. THE PLACE IS COMPLETELY BURNED, AND THERE IS ONLY ONE DOOR FOR ESCAPE AND THE MONSTER DIDN'T COME OUT. HE IS FINISHED!

TRUE, THERE WAS ONLY ONE DOOR OF ESCAPE FOR THE MONSTER, BUT THE FOUGREUIL FRANKENSTEIN MONSTER DOESN'T NEED DOORS TO GET OUT OF BUILDINGS. FOR AT THE REAR OF THE STRUCTURE WHERE NO. ONE WAS WATCHING BECAUSE THERE WAS ONLY A BLANK, BRICK WALL.



CASTLE of FRANKENSTEIN'S Back Issue Dept.



CoF #30 is NOW AVAILABLE!

☐ \$6.00 plus normal shipping
☐ \$8.00 postpaid

CASTLE OF FRANKENSTEIN BACK ISSUE SERVICE ORDER FORM

☐ #1(F)\$28 ☐ #2(VG-F)\$16 ☐ #2(G-VG, spines are starting to split and/or may have dinged corner or small tears)\$12 ☐ #4(VG-F)\$12 ☐ #4(G, bundling damage)\$8 ☐ #5(VG)\$15 ☐ #8(VG-F)\$16 ☐ #10(VG-F, as inventory disappears may have minor bundling damage)\$15 ☐ #12(VG-F)\$15 ☐ #13(VG-F)\$15 ☐ #14(VG)\$14 ☐ #15(VG)\$12 ☐ #16(VG-F)\$12 ☐ #17(VG-F)\$12 ☐ #18(VG-F, may have a couple of folded over pages as inventory disappears)\$12 ☐ #19(VG-F)\$12 ☐ #21(F)\$18 ☐ #23(F)\$15 ☐ #24(F)\$15 ☐ #26 \$10 postpaid in an envelope ☐ #26 \$8 plus normal \$6 shipping in a carton ☐ #27 \$8 postpaid ☐ #27 \$6 plus normal shipping ☐ #28 \$8 postpaid ☐ #28 \$6 plus normal shipping ☐ #29 \$8 postpaid ☐ #29 \$6 plus normal shipping ☐ 1967 Annual(VG)\$20 ☐ Yearbook 2000 \$9 postpaid ☐ Yearbook 2000 \$7 plus normal shipping THE JOURNAL OF FRANKENSTEIN ☐ #2 \$8 postpaid ☐ #2 \$6 plus normal shipping ☐ #3 \$8 postpaid ☐ #3 \$6 plus normal shipping ☐ #4 \$8 postpaid ☐ #4 \$6 plus normal shipping ☐ ADD \$6 for shipping of 1-10 magazines, 10¢ each additional. Make a copy of this page and send your check, money order or scary charge card information to: DENNIS DRUKTENIS PUBLISHING & MAIL ORDER, INC., Dept. Gothic, 348 Jocelyn Pl., Highwood, IL 60040

Ship to:

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____

ZIP _____

DON'T MISS CoF #31 in August 2001!



No. 31 ALL-NEW!

THE FACES OF FU MANCHU, UNIVERSAL MUMMIES PART THREE, ANOTHER LOOK AT HITCHCOCK'S FINE FEATHERED FIENDS, FRANKENSTEIN VIDEO MOVIEGUIDE (Letter "I"), FRANKENSTEIN BOOK REVIEWS (FU MANCHU'S BRIDE), THE CREEPER WALKS AMONG US, DRUMS OF FU MANCHU, MUCH MORE!

I DON'T want to MISS CASTLE OF FRANKENSTEIN #31 so I'm pre-ordering it for only \$6.00 today! (\$8.00 postpaid after 6/30/01)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip _____

Send your check, money order or charge card information to:
 DENNIS DRUKTENIS PUBLISHING & MAIL ORDER, INC.
 348 Jocelyn Pl. Highwood, IL 60040
 FAX: (847)681-9978
 E-MAIL: Scaremail@aol.com
 CASTLE: www.scarymonstersmag.com

READ AND COLLECT ALL The New Adventures of FRANKENSTEIN!



ORDER Pre-order but DON'T MISS this year's issues!

☐ Tome #1 FRANKENSTEIN LIVES AGAIN! For \$9.00 postpaid

☐ Tome #2 TERROR OF FRANKENSTEIN for \$9.00 postpaid

☐ Tome #3 BONES OF FRANKENSTEIN for \$9.00 postpaid

☐ Tome #4 FRANKENSTEIN MEETS DRACULA for \$9.00 p.p.

☐ Tome #5 FRANKENSTEIN VS. THE WEREWOLF for \$7.00

☐ Tome #6 FRANKENSTEIN IN THE LOST WORLD for \$7.00

☐ Order any three for \$20.00 #1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (order the ones you want)

(Offer expires 8/31/01 prices include U.S./CANADA postage, add \$2.00 additional for each issue for foreign shipping)

CASTLE OF
FRANKENSTEIN

TM
Presents

The New Adventures of

FRANKENSTEIN TM

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Send your check, money order or charge card information to
DENNIS DRUKTENIS PUBLISHING 348 Jocelyn Pl. Highwood, IL 60040

